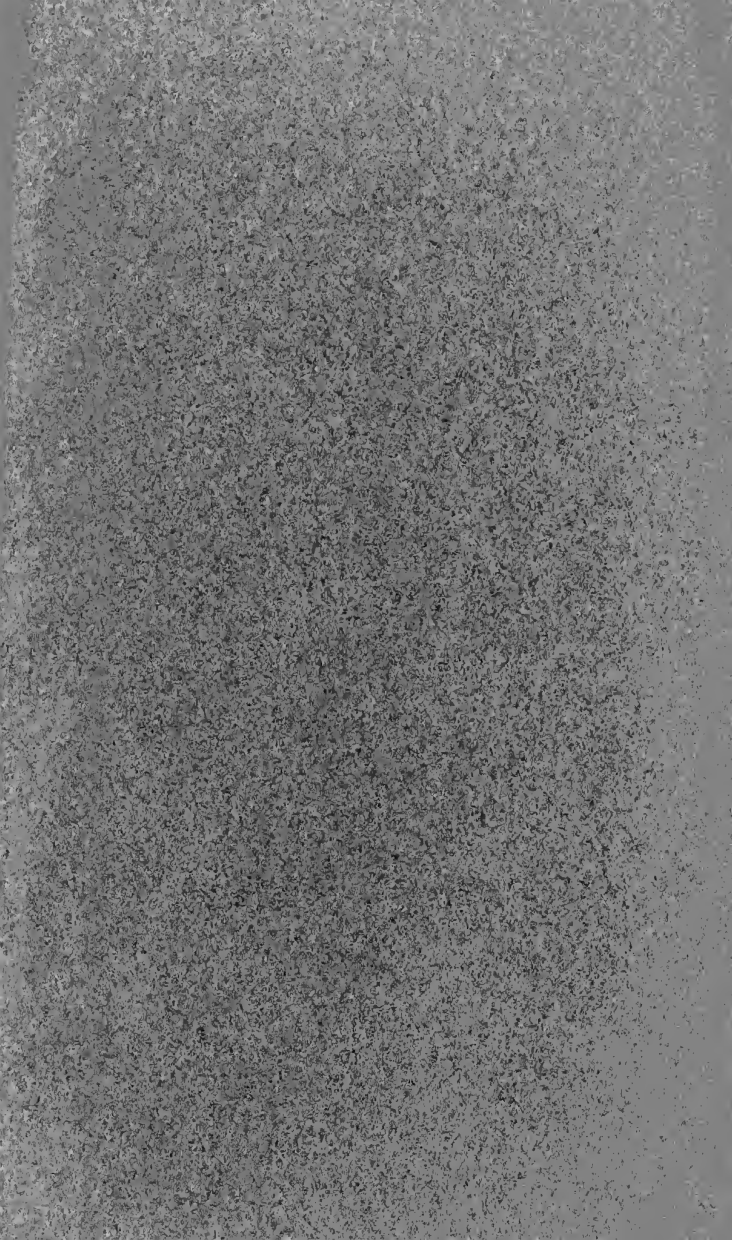
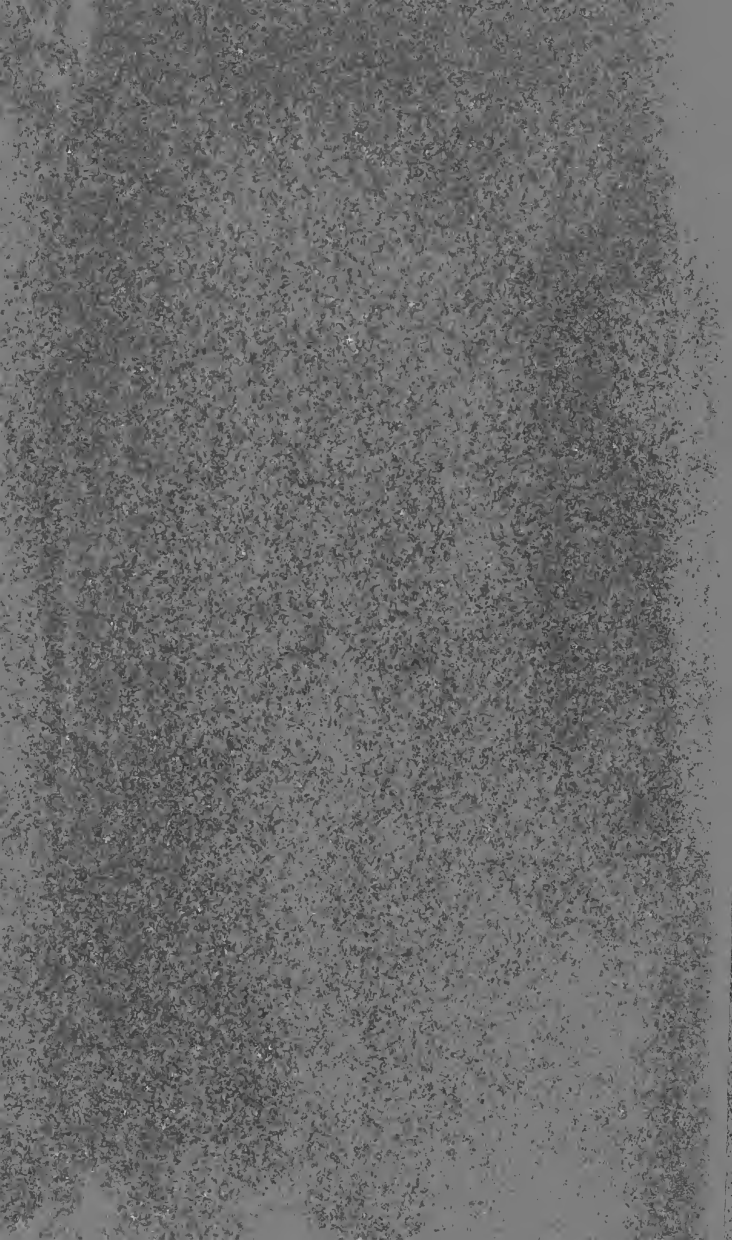
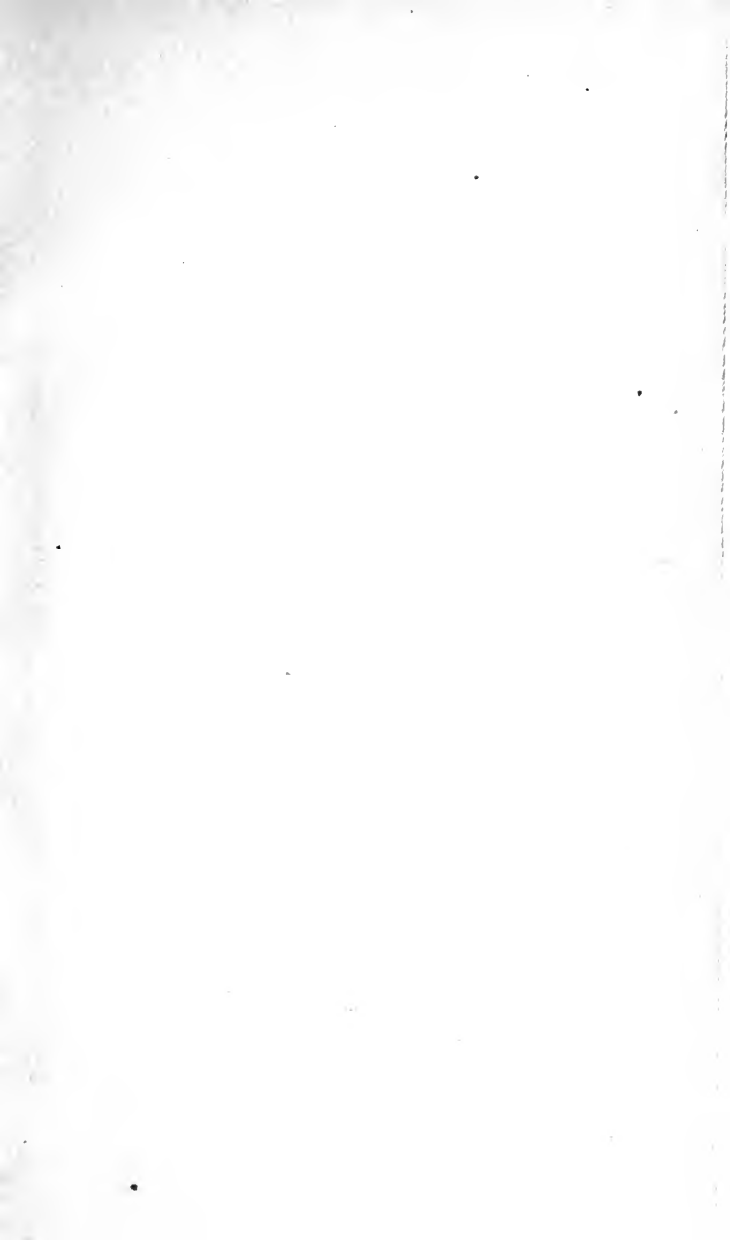




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THE BARBARIANS IN BELGIUM

By PIERRE NOTHOMB

Translated by JEAN E. H. FINDLAY



WITH A PREFATORIAL LETTER

By CARTON DE WIART

(Belgian Minister of Justice)

LONDON

JARROLD & SONS

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TO THE
OFFICE OF
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Germany has taught the world that it is possible to direct public affairs honestly, and to make war loyally.

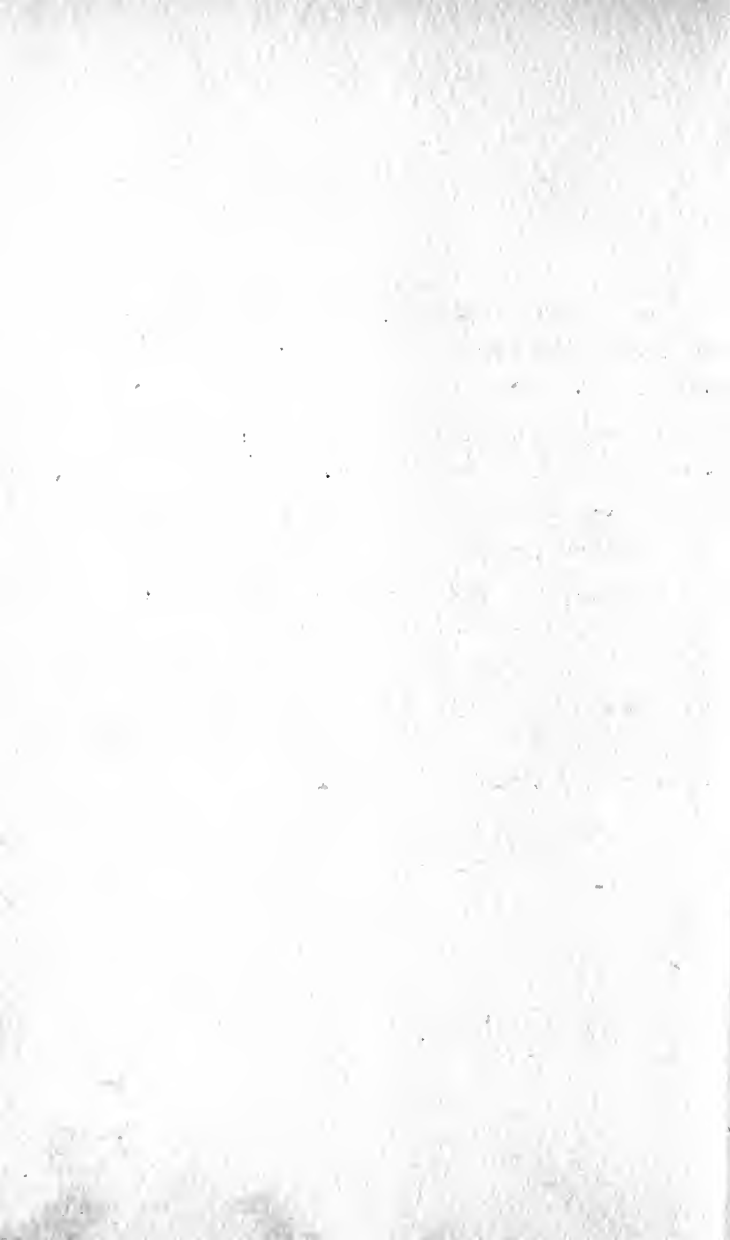
Our army is, so to speak, typical of the intelligence and morality of the German people.

We have nothing to apologise for. We are not a violent people. We do good to everyone.

Our strength is the strength of intellect, and our victory that of mind over matter.

We are truthful. Our chief characteristics are humanity, kindness, honesty, and the Christian virtues. In this wicked world we represent love, and God is with us.

—Letter from Professor Lasson (Nov., 1914).



LETTER FROM MONSIEUR HENRI
CARTON DE WIART

(Belgian Minister of Justice).

MY DEAR FRIEND,

This book, in which you give a truthful account of the crimes that Germany has committed on our soil, is one long tragedy. In writing these pages, you have performed a noble and righteous work. You have shown both filial love for Belgium, and just indignation against her aggressors.

It is not enough that an Official Commission of Inquest, whose enquiry lasted six months and was made with all possible care and the fullest authority, should give a mere statement of proven facts of the German violation, both of the most solemn promises and the laws of war, of human rights and international law—in short, of all that constitutes the foundation and structure of civilisation.

The proofs having been brought together, it is necessary to form a synthesis. It is necessary to point to the motive which instigated those crimes, and it was of the utmost importance that the victims should be avenged, and their oppressors shamed; that these crimes should be denounced, not only by an official inquest, but by the whole public, and that they should be stigmatised by that public as they well deserve to be. That is what you set out to do, and that is what you have accomplished. I hope that other writers, as sincere and courageous as yourself, may be inspired to follow your example, until there is not in any country in the world a man worthy of the name who can plead ignorance as a reason for remaining indifferent to a cause which affects all humanity. Our beloved country, whose honour has been crucified, must proclaim aloud the truth, not so much to implore pity as to demand Justice.

Justice! At the very mention of this word I can hear on every side bitter protestation and sarcasm.

“Justice!” exclaim the worthy people whose homes have been destroyed, whose families

have disappeared in this cataclysm, and who are forced to submit to the insolent occupation of their towns and villages. "Justice! What a mockery!"

A great Power, which, with many others, had sworn that Belgium should remain perpetually neutral, has now arrogantly exacted that this neutrality should be violated for its own profit and against its co-signatories. Having undertaken voluntarily the duty of guaranteeing our neutrality, now, in the most cowardly manner, she has leapt at our throat. Has history ever seen more flagrant perjury? With a certain cynicism, the German Empire even admitted the fault through their Chancellor, on August 11th, at the Reichstag. And, confronted with such a crime, what have they said or done, these forty-two States, who solemnly inscribed in the first article of one of their Hague Conventions, "The territory of neutral Powers is inviolable"?

It is not in that alone that Right has been manifestly outraged. An agreement, signed at the Hague by these States, under the title of "Laws and Customs of War on Land" decided on some imperative rules, a minimum of obliga-

tions that imposed on belligerents the respect of human life and the property of others. Now, of all these laws, there is not one—no, not a single one—that the Germans have not infringed. Their armies had hardly forced their way through our land than they began freely to pillage and massacre. Signed by the military or civil authorities, their proclamations systematically ordered collective and atrocious punishments. By thousands, the non-combatants, and among them priests, old men, women and children, have been shot or tortured. Others have been sent in thousands to Prussia. For no strategic reason undefended cities have been bombarded. Celebrated sanctuaries and charitable establishments, marvels of art, have been destroyed, and this pillage has been organised on a vast scale, like some huge enterprise. It is no more war than an assassination is a duel. It is a terrible accumulation of crimes against the common law of humanity, a succession of horrible atrocities. And, faced by such crimes, what have the States replied? What voice is raised in protest? International law, laws of warfare, the rights of humanity—of what use are these big words if not to dupe the weak and to allow the strong

to make use of them whenever it is to their advantage ?

So think and so speak many of the victims who have suffered. They do not complain. They keep back their tears. But at least they do not wish that in the attempt to console Belgium's sufferings she should be surrounded by a false setting of humanitarian proclamations and international conventions, hypocritical screens behind which she can divine the incurable thoughtlessness, selfishness and cowardice of men and nations.

But such language must not be accepted or tolerated. The day that these blasphemers triumph, and not before, shall we be vanquished ! Until the end, that means until the definite victory, our legitimate defence must be made by force of arms as well as by the justice of our cause.

Undoubtedly the laws of humanity are against the abuse of brute force, a means of defence whose immediate efficacy we must not exaggerate. But it would be more unwise still to undervalue the importance of this means of defence. Let us leave to others to show that despicable audacity by which they qualify as "scraps of paper" the solemn pacts concluded between

nations. Do not let us for one moment hesitate to affirm the principles of eternal morality. It is on the battle-fields of the human conscience, and not only by the voice of the cannon, and at the point of the sword, that the fate of nations is definitely decided. However frightful the scene may be to-day, mankind has not quite ceased to be human. We are plunged in darkness, but, dense as may be the gloom that surrounds us, the morning will come at last, and can we not already see the light of dawn on the horizon? As it becomes more widely known, does not our cause arouse the sympathy of all countries and all loyal hearts? In his Pastoral Letter, which has now become historical, has Cardinal Mercier not declared that our little Belgium holds the highest rank in the esteem of the nations?

Need we look for a witness of this among our Allies, whose Governments have so loyally kept their promises made in 1839, whose armies fight beside our soldiers on Belgian territory—which, thanks to their help, we shall eventually win back—and whose populations give a warm and affectionate welcome and offer ready hospitality to our refugees.

Let us listen rather to those voices in neutral countries, free to be raised in our favour. In September, in the United States, I felt the hearts of the American people beat in unison with ours. It is only a few weeks ago that the statesman who presided so brilliantly at its destinies, and on whose initiative was brought together the Conference of 1907, Theodore Roosevelt, publicly recalled the abuse of this Conference: "All these offences have been committed by Germany, and the treatment that she has inflicted on Belgium is the gravest of international misdeeds." And replying to those who see in conventions simply postulates: "If I had ever for a moment supposed that the signature of the Hague Convention signified no more than the expression of a pious hope that each Power had the liberty to disregard with impunity in its own interests, I should certainly not have permitted America to take part in so pernicious a comedy." In his turn another great citizen of America, Dr. Charles W. Eliot, Emeritus Professor of the University of Harvard, did me the honour to express the profound sympathy of all cultured Americans for suffering Belgium, as well as horror

for the methods of German warfare. In Switzerland, at the opening of the session of the Federal Chambers, the Dean of the National Council, Henry Fazy, last December spoke of the inspiration Belgium's independence is to a small nation loyal and proud like their own.

Among our neighbours and friends of the Netherlands—where in hundreds of thousands the Belgians have flown from their devastated homes and found frank and generous hospitality—men of learning are rebelling against the manifesto of their colleagues in the German Universities. "Among them," exclaims Kernkamp, the Professor of Amsterdam, "there has not been found a single man capable of showing a chivalric feeling for the unhappy Belgians and their Government, that so courageously refused to comply with the German demands. The Belgians are the only people who may justly say that this war has been forced upon them. They might have safeguarded their lives and their belongings had they been cowardly enough not to oppose the passage of the German troops. They have not been guilty of such an act of cowardice. That is the only thing with which the Germans can reproach them."

For my own part, I admit, when I read the manifesto of the German intellectuals, I thought at first of some humorous imitation in the style of . . . perhaps Mark Twain or Chesterton, who excel in these mystifications. But I could not help feeling that it was overdone, and regretted the ridiculous exaggeration that its authors were giving to German pedantism.

When one recalls such absurdities as these :
 " It is not true that we have criminally violated the neutrality of Belgium. . . ." " It is not true that our soldiers have taken the life or goods of a single citizen without having been forced to do so, in the necessity of legitimate defence. . . ."
 " It is not true that our troops have wantonly destroyed Louvain. . . ." " It is not true that we make war by disregarding the laws of humanity. . . ." I felt ashamed for whoever had compiled this statement when I found they had put at the foot of this litany of coarse denials the names of several learned men whom I had the honour of knowing, and for whom I professed the most sincere respect, such as MM. Lamprecht, Wundt or von Lisst.

Since then I have been assured from a reliable

source that this document is authentic, and that English and American humorists had nothing to do with it. I am glad for their sakes that it is so.

But how can one explain this statement ?

Have the signatures been obtained by one or other of those proceedings that German Culture has employed in our country to compel peasants to serve as guides on pain of death, or banks to divulge the secrets of their safes ? Or has this official document been subjected, after the signatures have been obtained, to a rigorous censorship ? Do not let us hesitate to concede to these intellectuals the benefit of one or other of these doubts. Or let us at least say that Philip drunk is not Philip sober, and that when they are sober they will investigate those official inquests, and read such books as this. Then if they persist in stubbornly denying the infamies of which our blackened ruins are a silent witness, if they still excuse their ignominious behaviour by covering themselves with the mantle of "Weltpolitik," what can we call them ? And how will they be able unblushingly to face any honest man ? How will each of them silence his own conscience ?

When the storm burst, my dear friend, you, like so many others, were taken unawares in your home amidst your peaceful occupations. All who have read your beautiful inspired poems can imagine the tower of ivory in which your soul had its dwelling. Immediately leaving your children and your budding fame you took up arms in the Brussels "Garde Civique" and valiantly played your part. Your poet's soul ached within you at sight of the bloodshed, the ruined homes, the massacre. Then you realised that the pen is as much a weapon as the sword. And, eloquently using only the most authentic proofs, you have described the great tribulation of the Belgian people, the living personification in the world to-day of all that is noble and right. You are serving your country still in thus interpreting her sufferings and her hopes. And in so doing you are carrying out the tradition of the name you bear, and which is so closely associated with the history of our independence.

* * * * *

In one of his confidential utterances in which all his philosophy is contained, Bismarck does

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not hesitate to class with the rules of warfare the destruction of properties and the massacre of populations, in order, he says, "to bring ruined and devastated peoples to solicit peace and to submit with docility to the conditions of the victors." Such an idea is abominable. Moreover, it is false. It is sufficient for our purpose to study our annals in order to know that the Belgians have never allowed themselves to be crushed by suffering, nor have they readily yielded.

You know, doubtless, in the old museum of Namur, erected in such a picturesque fashion at the Port of Grognon, at the confluence of the Sambre and the Meuse, that mysterious monument in the rich and elaborate style of the fifteenth century.

It represents, carved in stone and mounted on a pedestal, a decapitated body of a knight clothed in armour, his hands crossed piously on his breast—but headless. No name, no blazoning, no date. Only on the pedestal one can read this device in Gothic lettering, "Heure viendra qui tout payera." This hour will strike for us also. We know it, and we are glad of it. All our strength and energy are to-day

united round our King in the battle-fields of Flanders. Suffering has momentarily crushed us undoubtedly, yet we are full of hope in the eternal justice, of confidence in the inevitable reparation. It may be long, perhaps—what matter? We are victims, but victims with a just pride. “Heure viendra qui tout payera,” and then what joy! When with the youth of our country ripened by duty heroically fulfilled, tried in the fire of battle, we shall create, shall we not, a new life and a Belgium even more beautiful than that of old?

Believe me, my dear Friend,

Yours most sincerely,

(Signed) HENRI CARTON DE WIART.

Havre, 1st February, 1915.

Part of this book appeared on January 1st in the “*Revue des Deux Mondes*,” and was shortly afterwards published in pamphlet form. Innumerable documents and accounts of eye-witnesses having since then increased the pile of papers of the Belgian Inquest, and it has been

thought wise to complete the work thus begun. This might have been done by adding to the first chapter others that would have formed its complement; but to avoid repetition and to keep the synthetic character of the work, it has been thought better to keep to the simple plan of enlarging it and to try to put into the modest framework of the first effort all the suffering and martyrdom of a nation.

The publication of the present work coincides with that of the volume in which the Belgian Government have brought together the different reports signed by the Commission of Inquest on the German Atrocities. The present volume makes no attempt to complete that, but if one may so put it merely to illustrate it, to enlarge and add a human touch to the bare statement of essential facts: some little incident—by its depth or its human value—can throw on the matter much unexpected light. And beneath the official document one can hear the pathetic tales of the victims and their groans and sobs.

The first Report of the Commission is dated August 28, 1914, the last January, 1915. Thus the inquest gives an account of five months of war. Their investigations bear the stamp of

thoroughness and honesty, expressing only certainty when they can vouch for the authenticity of the facts quoted. With such reliable data to draw upon it has been easily possible to present a more impressive and general picture, a kind of panorama of the German barbarism.

This book is not complete. It cannot be. The history of the German atrocities is no tale of the past; it is a tale of horror that is going on daily. A complete work can only attain its full value when, Belgium being liberated, there can be given without fear of in any way harming the persons implicated, all the names and all the details.



I.



CHAPTER I.

THE AWAKENING OF A PEOPLE.

No one who did not see Brussels during the early days of August can have any idea of what is meant by the awakening of a people. A nation, wrapped in the security of a seemingly lasting peace, whose only pride, it would appear, lay in her riches, suddenly finds herself threatened with the horrors of war: a war that in no way concerned her—she had nothing whatever to do with it, and was, moreover, protected by sacred promises—and which was to make her its first victim. The odious German ultimatum demanded her Honour or her Life. And she answered: “My Life.”

She gave her life that she might remain worthy of her traditions. There was no hesitation, though everyone knew what suffering was in store for them. On the historic night of August 2nd, while the people were still in ignorance of

danger, the King and his Ministers assembled in the Palace neither discussed the matter nor dreamt for a moment of compromise. When, on the next day, the public learned simultaneously of the German ultimatum and King Albert's proud reply, there was a burst of excitement. All the merchants and shopkeepers and workmen, some rich and successful, others wearied and worn by hard work, discovered, as always happens in such tragic moments, their soul—the soul of their knights of old and the free pride of the old burghers. The sterling honesty of a people of substantial bourgeoisie virtues was expressed with one unanimous voice. To celebrate her awakening and proclaim her resistance, Brussels decked herself with flags.

Not that the people were surprised at their own action. An honest man is not astonished at his own honesty. But, in this burst of natural pride, the nation for the first time for long felt itself truly united. Belgium, divided formerly by its parties and languages, rent asunder by social strife, was now one, heart and soul. The least patriotic became loyal in their enthusiasm, and the different parties acted as one man. Germany was faced by the absolute unanimity of

a people that she had tried in vain to seduce, and that was not to be bought for thirty pieces of silver !

The army rose, and with it all the youth of the country. Volunteers flocked from all parts. Never had a more beautiful ideal been realised. Rich and poor, gentlemen and burghers, peasants and workmen, hastened eagerly to the assistance of their mother country, even before she had time to call upon her children. The Germans were coming, so be it ! But they would find a human wall awaiting them ! Long trains transported the eager regiments to Liége. The 3rd of August was spent in a fever of impatience. . . . On the morning of the 4th of August, at the very hour that King Albert, in the pathetic address that he delivered before the Chambers, still expressed the hope that "the threatened event would not take place," the enemy's army was entering Belgian territory by three different routes. By evening it was encamped before our forts.

The next day the news of the victorious resistance of Liége rang throughout Belgium. Never before had we seen our soldiers at war. All Germany, who had calculated on a mere show

of resistance on our part, was amazed and dumfounded. On the evening of the first attack I saw crowding round the newspaper sellers, whose papers were being eagerly bought by the crowd, old men and children weeping for joy. In the streets strangers were shaking hands with each other without uttering a word.

But, alas ! along with this cheering report of victory came others that filled us with horror. The flame that reddened the sky on our frontiers in the east was not only that of battle, it was the fire of burning towns and villages. The blood shed was not only that of our soldiers but that also of our massacred people. And the great shout of victory that was heard, the hurrah of our enthusiastic troops was mingled with the heartrending cry of tortured prisoners, of the wounded that were mutilated, of women that were violated, and villages that were sacked and destroyed. General von Emmich, from the moment that he set foot on our land, had announced by hundreds of posters that the Germans felt for the Belgian people " the highest esteem and the deepest sympathy." We were not long in learning the value of that esteem and sympathy and the hypocrisy of the Barbarians !

After a combat lasting several hours on the bridge of Visé, the enemy had entered the picturesque little town, forced the inhabitants to level the earthworks of defence made by our soldiers, and had shot, without reason and simply as an example, eleven civilians. The bodies of two of the most notable among them of the name of Broutsa had been flung on the pavement, face upwards ; a superior officer and some young Prussian lieutenants had taken up their stand against a wall, and others, having forced the population to come and look at this ghastly spectacle, exclaimed in French : " This fate awaits all of you if you remain hostile ! " The town was already in flames. At Soiron, the gamekeeper and two gardeners had been seized and massacred with bayonet thrusts, the château had been wrecked, and the burgomaster had been sent to Germany. At Olne, the parish priest, M. Renzonnet, and the parish clerk, M. Fondcuir, guilty of having lifted one of the window curtains in his house to watch the Germans pass, had been seized and dragged from the house, maltreated, then led out of the village and shot. A peasant who was going to bring in his cows, a child who was passing too near the guns, had

both met the same fate. At Forêt, Farmer Delbaux and his two sons had been driven before the troops, whilst, with rifles held to their heads, they had blown out the brains of his other two children. The schoolmaster, M. Rongy, had been forced to trample under foot the Belgian flag, and had then been shot, although his wife, with her four little children clinging to her skirts, had held up the youngest in her arms before the oppressors, begging for mercy ! The Germans had burned the farms and shot a group of hostages, among whom were some young men and the parish priest, whose bodies were picked up the next day quite unrecognisable, so horribly were they mutilated. The Barbarians then descended to Saint-Hadelin, where they massacred sixty-one persons, butchering whole families—the family named Warnier for example : one of the daughters, when she regained consciousness, had to creep wounded from under the piled-up bodies of her father, her sister and her two brothers, one of whom still breathed. They had burned Battice, killed forty-seven civilians at Hervé, then burned three hundred houses, and forced the burgomaster, with a pistol at his head,

to sign a declaration declaring that the destruction of the town had been caused by the shells from the fort of Fléron ! At Soumagne they had taken one hundred and eighty-two victims, sixty of whom were shot in the meadow of Fonds-Leroy, and then their bodies were mutilated by a hundred maddened bayonets. A young man had been found buried with his head down and his feet sticking out of the ground, and his brother had been burned alive in his farm. At Warsage they had hanged, at Barchon they had burned, at Julimont they had destroyed, and at Berneau had driven out by fire and sword the inhabitants, who had fled to Holland carrying their wounded children. . . . There was scarcely a village that was not devastated. Collective pillage, individual theft, outrage on women, and the shooting of civilians *en masse* : such cases were daily multiplied, and we learned that henceforth it would not only be the lives of our soldiers but the martyrdom of the civil population, the blood of a whole people, that would have to pay for its Honour !

And we learned how before Liège the Prussian regiments had advanced to the attack, imitating the Belgian bugle-calls, how detachments,

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preceded by the white flag, had suddenly revealed mitrailleuses and attacked our men at close range ; we learned how the enemy deliberately violated the Geneva Convention ; how they respected neither human life nor the laws of warfare. And a murmur of horror and disgust was mingled with our enthusiasm.

CHAPTER II.

BELGIUM AND THE GERMAN INVASION.

So, from the very outbreak of hostilities, we realised something of the Germans' cruelty and ruthlessness, for at the very first onset their methods of warfare were revealed. Their excesses in the Hervé district, their odious behaviour at Liége, formed the double prelude to a long series of barbarous deeds and violations of international law. Belgium, who had just solemnly protested before the whole world against the violation of her neutrality, found herself yet again obliged, bloodstained and mutilated, to appeal to that moral tribunal which, in spite of everything, still rules the universe. And, in order to get together a daily account of the details of this pathetic tale, there was inaugurated, at the suggestion of M. Carton de Wiart, Minister of Justice, a Committee, composed of

magistrates and lawyers, to whom was entrusted the mission of registering the grievances of the people and of the army. The royal decree, creating it the "Commission of Inquest on the Violation of International Law and the Laws and Customs of Warfare," was published in the *Moniteur belge* on August 8th.

It included among its members M. Van Iseghem, President of the Chamber of the Court of Cassation ; M. Paul Verhaegen, Councillor in the Court of Appeal in Brussels ; M. Nys, Councillor in the same Court, one of the greatest European authorities on questions of International Law ; M. Woden and M. Cattier, Professors of the Free University, and M. Gillard, Director in the Ministry of Justice. When, on August 18th, the Government withdrew to Antwerp, the Commission was reconstituted there. M. Cooreman, Minister of State and former President of the Chamber, acted as Director, having with him Count Goblet d'Alviella, Minister of State and Vice-President of the Senate ; M. Ryckmans, Senator ; M. Strauss, Alderman of Antwerp ; M. Van Cutsem, Honorary President of the Court of Justice. The new secretaries were M. Ernst de Bunswyck, Chief of the Cabinet of the

Ministry of Justice, and M. Perre, Counsellor of the Legation. The departure for Ostend and Sainte-Adresse in no way interfered with the activities of the Commission; moreover, with the assistance of English examining magistrates, a Sub-Committee was formed in London at the instigation of Sir Mackenzie Chalmers, Under-Secretary of State, and M. de Cartier de Marchienne, Minister Plenipotentiary to the King; M. Henri Lafontaine, the well-known pacifist, and M. Henri Davingnon.

Scrupulous impartiality and exactitude, and a mistrust *a priori* of indirect testimonies were the lines on which the Commission of Inquest proceeded. It accepted nothing without ascertaining the facts and submitting the witnesses to a severe cross-examination. Its proceedings were like those of an examining magistrate who arrives at the truth by the consistence of the evidence. It employed the help of well-known legal men, who were sent to the bedsides of the wounded, and among the soldiers in the firing line, to get confirmation of facts which they were bound to have witnessed, sometimes tracking from village to village fugitive peasants, whose testimony demanded further investigation, ransacking the

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files of criminal courts for information regarding the morality and trustworthiness of these witnesses, and scrupulously verifying the excuses or accusations of the Germans.* In the official reports that have been successively published, the Commission has put forward nothing that it was not in a position to prove. Places and dates of the outrages that it quotes have been carefully noted, and names of victims and witnesses have been added whenever they were not persons living in the occupied area, where the German authorities would have made them pay dearly for their courageous revelations. But these reports

*A letter, taken at random from the files, gives some idea of the proceedings of the Commission. At his request, the Procurator of the King at Ghent writes to the Chief Constable of Melle :

"... Many farms and houses have been burned by the German soldiers on the pretext that this civil population would have taken part in the attack and fired on them. It is important that this fact should be carefully investigated and verified.

"I ask you consequently to enquire minutely if witnesses can certify that the civilians have used arms against the German troops or have molested them ; kindly let me know the result of your investigations and tell me, if such be the case, the names and Christian names of the witnesses."

Such a conscientious proceeding doubles the value of the reply sent by the Burgomaster of Melle :

"I can assure you on my honour that no civilian of the parish fired on the German troops, nor took part in the battle of the 7th September."

And regarding his own responsibility in the matter :

"I had requisitioned all arms, which can still be seen in the Town Hall, and those that had not been deposited there were seized. I send you herewith a copy of the announcement made to the people."

are necessarily brief, incomplete and a little cut and dried.

Having read them myself with a thrill of horror, I obtained permission to go through the immense collection of testimonies and official reports on which they are based. The summary was not enough for me; I read all the documents and the investigations, and I could have read nothing so calculated to rouse one's indignation. I have seen my country living since the beginning of the invasion amidst tragic suffering. I have heard her sobs, her groans of agony and the great cry that went up from the occupied districts like a wail of despair from the depth of an abyss. I have known in all their grim horror the details of her frightful martyrdom; both those that can be disclosed now and those that will be disclosed later. When at last this formidable mass of evidence that I have before me now and which is continually increasing, when at last it can be published in a complete form—and that can only be when Belgium is liberated—it will constitute the most terrible and conclusive charge against Germany. I shall endeavour in the following pages to bring out, by the help of unpublished and characteristic documents,

coupled with some personal memories, the synthesis and the motive of these atrocities, but I can only succeed in revealing an infinitesimal part of what our land has suffered—what she is suffering to-day !

* * * * *

We were never expecting war. And when it burst upon us—after the first enthusiasm was over, we realised that a calamity had befallen us—but even then we had no idea of all we would have to undergo. The invasion might be hard, certainly, but there would be no unnecessary violence, and we would bear it pluckily, but without useless rebellion—with the double courage of resisting, but resisting in silence ! The Belgian authorities had announced to the people that the German army was one of the best disciplined in the world, and that they must not by any impulsive action against the enemy infringe the laws of war : it was a war between the armies, in which civilians must take no active part. Their strict duty was not to act as guides to the enemy, or to give him information or help him in any way, but at the same time to tolerate his presence when it was neces-

sary. Not only as a question of dignity but as a precaution for safety, and as a reward for such behaviour, the peaceful inhabitants would have to suffer at least no other torture than the inevitable moral suffering! In order to prevent any rash action, the Belgian Government gave orders that arms were to be deposited in the different town halls. Explicit instructions were posted up in all the towns and villages on this subject, and every day the newspapers reprinted them on their first pages in large type. These orders having been carried out, the people waited, resigned and patient, for the uninvited guest who was coming to them. This people, direct and honest in their dealings, themselves respecting international law, sure of the value of their treaties and so confident in them as to have long neglected any preparation for their own defence, thoroughly relying on that protection guaranteed by the ancient customs of warfare and further assured by the recent Conference of the Hague, feared only for their sons serving their country an honourable death and for themselves the sorrow of seeing their towns invaded. They knew that if war is becoming more terrible, it is also becoming more humane, that the use

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of unnecessarily cruel arms is forbidden, that dishonourable ruses are condemned, that the wounded have the right of immediate help, and prisoners of protection, and that personal belongings and the homes of non-combatants must remain untouched. They knew that Germany had signed these Conventions in 1899 and again in 1907, Conventions forbidding the bombardment of open towns, the pillage even of occupied towns and the confiscation of private property. They knew that the honour of families, the life of individuals and the exercises of religion ought to be respected; that requisitions must be in proportion to the resources of the district, as well as to the needs of the army; that to seize everything, to intentionally destroy or deface churches, hospitals, schools, museums, historic monuments and works of art and science, is strictly forbidden, and that, in short, "no collective punishment, pecuniary or otherwise, can be levelled against populations in punishment of individual crimes for which they cannot be considered collectively responsible." They knew all the laws and believed that the part of neutral co-signatees was to observe them and to practise them. They received the Germans with

the grave proud dignity of those who, temporarily dominated, are not yet vanquished. And they abstained from practising any hostile act, being certain that in return the enemy would also respect the laws of war. So that the German crime at first amazed a trusting people and then subjected them to martyrdom.



II.



CHAPTER III.

THE PRISONERS AND THE WOUNDED.

THERE is not one of their so-called promises that the Germans have not broken in Belgium. After all, does that surprise us since their first move in this campaign was the trampling under foot of a sacred bond, the tearing up of an agreement of neutrality, both imposed and guaranteed by them. One violation leads to more and other crimes follow the first. Their contempt, both *systematic* and *deliberate*—as I shall presently prove—of the laws of humanity and honour has left an ineffaceable stain on the history of the Great War. The odious deeds of which it has been the pretext are so numerous and so horrible that in endeavouring to relate them I have need of much courage to carry out my purpose, and to spare my hearers I am sometimes compelled to veil the horror of certain atrocities, or even

to pass over them in silence. To preserve some measure of calm in reading these tragic documents, I must forget that they deal with my own country and my own people.

Even the few details of the martyrdom of the Belgian civilians that are already known have roused in the world such indignation as almost to efface the memory of the shameful offences which the invader committed against the law of combatants, in particular of isolated combatants. The German, when he is not ranged in compact ranks, readily becomes afraid of his adversary, whom at no time does he respect. Trembling before his armed enemy, he revenges himself on him when he is helpless. The prisoner in his hands is not an unfortunate soldier, but a victim on whom to vent his hate. Thus the first series of crimes which stand out, when, having read the investigations of the Commission, we endeavour to classify its horrors, is that of outrages committed on men who have delivered themselves up as prisoners. In most cases, no mercy has been shown them; no action worthy of a conqueror, but instead, they have been subjected to the bullying cruelty, contempt and petty persecution that the sight of helpless individuals

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inspires in brutal minds. When the prisoners are numerous they are put in the rear and left practically unmolested ; in spite of everything the force of numbers tells, and the Germans content themselves with feeding them badly, if at all, and in the stations through which they pass, preventing the ambulance workers from giving them food. But, when only a few are taken prisoner there is no outrage to which they are not submitted. They are abused and ridiculed and insulted : " At Campenhout," recounts a witness, " I saw two prisoners ill-treated. They were jeered at and forced to go through a form of 'drill.' They were made to carry heavy loads and then beaten till they were incapable of proceeding another step." And the delighted regiment shouted with laughter ! The soldier, V. H., was made prisoner near Aërschot ; he was handed over to an officer and three soldiers, who bound him, asking him where his regiment was and where the bulk of the troops were concentrated. He either could not or would not reply, so they flung him on the ground, and kicked him, finally leaving him, still bound with ropes, after having taken his topcoat from him. A nurse, Mdlle. R. B., saw, on August 25th, in

Eppegem, a prisoner being struck on the head by soldiers with the butts of their rifles ; several dead bodies which she found in the streets of the same village had their heads battered in by similar treatment. The soldier named Piérard was surprised while out reconnoitring with several of his comrades. As he was wounded, they attended him. Then he and the others were driven with bayonet thrusts past two companies of German soldiers who fired at them. Rendered desperate, some of them threw themselves in the Démer, which flowed beside the road : they were still shot at ; Piérard ran down the bank, and, as a man who had just fired at him had missed him, an officer called out that a Belgian was not worth a bullet, and told them to let him drown. The poor wretch succeeded in hiding himself among some reeds and remained up to his neck in the water till morning. The two soldiers, Goffin and Heyvaerts, who were taken prisoner on August 6th, had their hands bound by the Germans, who then drove them before them under cover of their loaded rifles, compelling them to shout : " Belgians, do not shoot ! These are Belgians ! " During the retreat from Namur, an infantryman, Parfonry, along with several

others, fell into the enemy's hands. They tied them together with their wrists behind their backs, fastening them in fours, and making them march all day long, driving them on with their sabres and the butts of their rifles, and flinging them finally into the cellars of the Château of Saint-Gérard. For some unknown reason they seized, at his post, the station-master of Baelegem, and dragged him, a rope round his neck, behind their horses, walking, trotting or galloping ! A courier at Aërschot, on August 25th, brought some bad tidings ; this prisoner was made suffer for that, and was stabbed with lance-thrusts !

Here is still worse. Listen to this witness : " In M. Bauduin's château at Lubbeek, the Germans roasted a Belgian infantryman alive by putting him in the oven. The burned débris of his military equipment can still be seen there. Some German soldiers were wounded by the explosion of the cartridges that they had forgotten to take out of the prisoner's cartridge-bag. The concierge of the château, prior to undergoing the same torture, was compelled to be present at the scene, and profited by the confusion of the explosion to escape." At

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Esneux, on the night of August 5th, the Germans shot three Belgian soldiers. Four soldiers, retreating on August 9th, to Linden, before a patrol of the enemy greatly superior in numbers, took refuge in the house of the witness C., and, finding themselves surrounded, waved from the window a white handkerchief on the end of a poker. The Germans rushed on the house, and, when their prisoners had delivered up their arms, they seized weapons, and, with repeated blows, massacred the fugitives against the kitchen wall.

Two men taken prisoners on the Yser, on November 3rd, were questioned by a patrol composed of an officer and a dozen men. To compel them to reveal military information, they threatened them with death, then dragged them on the ground for a distance of over twenty yards in the direction of the river. The man named Burn (J. L.), of the 24th Company of Infantry, declares that, made a prisoner by the Germans, they endeavoured to force him to speak and give them information by dipping his hands in boiling water. He saw two other Belgian soldiers tortured quite near him ; one of them, who had rebelled, was seized by some of the soldiers, who, holding his arms and legs, twisted his neck until

death ensued; the second had his finger cut off. On October 20th the military chaplain, Van Crombruggen, and four witnesses, soldiers of the 12th Company of Infantry, picked up on the Bridge of Dixmude the body of Lieutenant Poncin of their own regiment. He had been shot, after having been bound by means of an iron chain twisted twelve times round his legs.

On August 24th, at Louvain, the Germans, bringing in a Belgian prisoner, hanged him from a lamp-post in front of the station. On September 6th, the cavalryman, Baekelandt, was disarmed, bound, and then ripped open with bayonets. And this is not an isolated instance. Near Sempst, the soldier, Lootens, saw bound to a tree the bodies of two carbineers ripped open with their entrails torn out. There is worse yet. At Tamines, a French superior officer was bound to the trunk of a tree and then a horse attached to each of his legs: at a given signal, whips were cracked to start the horses. That is quartering in all its cruelty! "I saw," said a witness, trembling as he described the awful scene, "I saw the man's trousers tear and his body split open."

That was a wounded man. The wounded

prisoners receive no better treatment than the others ; on the contrary, their helplessness is greater and it is all the easier to make them suffer. Let us hear what the cavalry quartermaster Baudouin Van de Kerchove, of the 5th Company of Lancers, has to say : " Wounded by two German bullets in the battle of Orsmael, on August 20, 1914, in spite of my wounds, the Germans ill-used me. One of them wrenched my rifle out of my hands, twirled it above my head and struck me violently on the back. Seeing that I was still alive, another fired on me at twelve yards. Fortunately the bullet only grazed my stomach." In a wood, near Baarbeck, were found a detachment of twenty-two cyclist carbineers all dead, eighteen had been finished off with bayonet thrusts in the head ; their bullet wounds were slight ; there were only four men mortally wounded who did not bear marks of bayonet wounds. Such incidents are of everyday occurrence.

At Montigny-le-Tilleul, men of the 13th German Company killed two wounded men of the 119th French Company. The first had his head split open with an axe by a soldier whilst one of his comrades was giving him a drink. The other

was crushed beneath a piece of ordnance. In this same district a man named Vital Arnould was shot on August 23rd, at six o'clock, for having ministered to a French soldier, Louis Sohier, who was wounded in the thigh; the latter was shot also. There is worse still: at the time of their entry into Namur, the Germans hurriedly had their compatriots removed from the Hospital Bribosia. Then they set fire to the building, posted men outside the door, and as the wounded French and Belgians, driven out by the fire, appeared on the door-step, they shot them down.

If there is one Convention which the most implacable of wars ought to respect it is the Convention of Geneva, signed by Germany, a civilised nation that used to boast of being merciful. She has not respected this Convention any more than any others in Belgium. The ambulances, protected by their flag, have been destroyed. They have made use of its badges to advance with less risk, and mixed with its doctors, most devoted and sincere workers who were doing their duty under its protection, thieving ambulance men and murderous brancardiers. The Belgians saw them at Tamines finishing off with bayonet thrusts the victims of

the massacre ; at Lodelinsary and at Jumet, they were seen to leave their stretchers for a moment to set fire to the houses. " Ambulance workers of the Red Cross," said a Liégeois to me a few days ago, " are employed alternately to kill and to cure the wounded ! "

It would take a long chapter to give anything like an account of the violations of the Geneva Convention, of which Belgium has been the scene. Systematic bombardment of hospitals in the open towns and in villages vacated by the troops ; the destruction of ambulances ; attacks made on convoys of the Red Cross ; the assassination of priests and doctors, who were ministering to the dying ; tortures inflicted on the dying themselves ; these have been incidents repeated every day during this long martyrdom. A Zeppelin bombarded the hospital of Seynze, while those of Malines, and Heyst-op-den-Berg were riddled with shells. Virtonville was not bombarded : they contented themselves with throwing bombs on the college, which was protected by a Red Cross flag. Eight struck the building and two struck one of the wards, killing ten wounded men instantaneously, and inflicting mortal wounds on twenty others. Captain

Caluwaert was the indignant witness of the bombardment of the hospital of Lierre: the first bomb fell a little to one side, killing a woman and a child. The German aviator who was directing the aim gave signals to rectify that, and the next shell landed directly on the hospital.

An ambulance was installed in the château of M. Jacobs at Wolverthem: the Prussian soldiers drove the inhabitants from the château, pillaged it and set fire to it. At the ambulance in the Allard Steel-works at Mont-sur-Marchienne, the Germans forced their way in, carrying off fourteen beds and destroying sixteen others!

On August 16th, on the road from Hannut to Tirlemont, a group of ambulance men, among whom there was not a single soldier, was fired on. The same thing occurred at Haecht on August 26th, and the wounded that a convoy was transporting were all injured by the bullets. On August 23rd, at Bioul, the road was lined with the dead bodies of ambulance workers, killed while they were ministering to the wounded: Dr. Petit's company was decimated there. Three brancardiers, M. Screvens, the abbés Piérard and Patron, were seized and made

serve as a shield for the enemy during an attack on Namur ; the two priests were killed. Seventeen of the Picpus Fathers were arrested at Aërschot whilst they were attending to the wounded and were sent to Germany. At Lebbeke, a man named Louis de Man, who was helping to transport some wounded Germans, was suddenly attacked, without rhyme or reason, by one of the enemy's brancardiers. The first inhabitant to be killed at Hastière was Dr. Halloy of the Red Cross, who had just been ministering with praiseworthy devotion to the Prussian aviator von Seydlitz. In the same village, M. H. Carton de Wiart, Director of the Ambulance there, was driven with two ambulance workers towards a house with loaded revolvers levelled at his head : " Go in there, and if anyone fires on us you will be the first to suffer." A brother of the Christian Schools was at Louvenjoul, on August 19th, with three ambulance workers. The Germans attacked them, tore off their armlets and flung them on to a dung-heap, striking them and inflicting upon them severe injuries. The poor wretches at last managed to escape, bearing with them a wounded man : " I had," said the worthy priest, " to

lay him down seven times on the ground because the German mitrailleuses were firing on us." A young girl from Louvain, Mdle. H., was arrested on this same day by an officer as she was coming out of the hospital wearing her badge, and was threatened with death. Again, on August 19th, eighty wounded men arrived in the town, having come on foot from Lubbeek amidst the blows and insults of their convoyers: in the morning the Prussians entered the village hospital where the men had taken refuge, and, killing one of them, had the rest thrown out into the street; magnanimously sparing their lives. At Wolverthem other Germans less merciful threw the wounded into the burning houses. As a more refined form of cruelty, a soldier at the ambulance of Hastière ordered the nurses to beat the dying men, and was astonished when they indignantly refused. At Louvain the Germans burst into the ambulance of the Infant Christ, fired on the doctors, Aerts and Ausloss, and drove them into the cellars. At Gomery, in the beautiful district of Gaumet, where the last of the Lorraine hills stretch into the very heart of the Ardennes, three hundred wounded, among whom was the interpreter, Lieutenant Deschars, were living, under

the protection of a French ambulance. On August 22nd several German detachments of the 47th Regiment of Infantry occupied the little village. Their leader entered the barn, which served as a hospital, and asked for an interpreter. The officer came forward: he had not uttered two words before he was shot. Then the massacre began, doctors succumbed pell-mell with their patients, and, after an hour, only a third remained alive! To crown this, they burned the village and the hospital with it.

Always the same ferocity and treachery. Never respecting the Red Cross badge borne by their enemies, the invaders readily profited themselves by the respect which the Belgians, French and British always show towards any institution for the care of the wounded. Let me give only a few examples. On August 25th, the day of a severe engagement at Vilvorde, the Germans took possession of the barracks belonging to the cyclist carbineers and the artillery. On the roof of the building they hoisted a huge Geneva flag, and stretched another on a rope in front of this edifice, across the main road from Malines. At Meysse, on September 17th, the General Staff of the 52nd

Company of Infantry took up their quarters in a villa from which they floated the same flag. At Houthem, where they were camping for the night, as they wished to sleep in peace, and as the Belgians were near, all the houses in which they were billeted were ornamented by a Red Cross flag, though there was not a single wounded man among them. . . . These are the people who abuse the use of the white flag, who dress their soldiers in stolen Belgian uniforms to make treacherous attacks. . . .

The Germans sometimes cynically brag of their contempt for the Geneva Convention. At Namur, the *Oberartz* admits that, in accordance with this Convention, they ought to send back to the campaigning army the doctors that they unlawfully detain; it adds that, this army being completely destroyed (!), it is impossible for them to do so. On the other hand, it is to the interest of the Germans to deprive the surroundings of Antwerp as much as possible of medical help, "Epidemic and illness being for them a trump card." And when, exasperated by their uselessness, the practitioners of whom they are speaking explain that at Saint-Hubert and at Florennes there are twelve hundred

wounded men, Belgian and French, who have lacked attention for a fortnight, and ask to be allowed to go there, this sinister spectacled scholar refuses to accord them this favour on the pretext that the wounded, having waited a fortnight, can easily wait a little longer ! The archives of the Commission contain the original of a prohibition sent by the Commandant of Brussels to Dr. V., who had asked to rejoin his regiment, and that "in spite of the protection afforded by the Geneva Convention ! " Dr. Henri Fredericq, detained under similar circumstances since the taking of the Chaufontaine fort, eventually succeeded in escaping from Liège and reported himself at his own headquarters, whereupon the occupants of the fort condemned his father, a learned Professor of the University, to imprisonment at Chartreuse until his son's return.*

Besides the violations of the German Convention the enquiries of the Belgian Commission leave no doubt regarding the violation of the Convention, which prohibits the use of expanding bullets

* See in the 7th Report of the Commission of Inquest the correspondence exchanged on this subject, between Professor Fredericq and Dr. Melis, Chief of the Medical Staff of the Belgian Army.

employed with the sole aim of increasing suffering. Some were picked up at Werchter, on the position occupied by the enemy during the battle of August 25th, and Dr. Attichaux and Dr. Van de Maele attended a wounded man who had been struck by one. At Antwerp a soldier died in the ambulance of the Rue de Bom from a wound caused by a dum-dum bullet. At Lubbeek two soldiers had their flesh frightfully torn by an explosive projectile. In the combats of Cappelle-au-Bois and Nieuwrode, and in the streets of Alost, similar wounds have been observed. And lastly, at Ninove, General Clooten's men found on the Hanoverian Lieutenant von Hadeln several cartridges containing explosive bullets; the expert to whom they were submitted testifies as to their nature.*

Thus, of all the laws instituted to mitigate the horrors of warfare, there is not one that the Germans have not ruthlessly trampled under foot. The only power the Germans recognise in

This is the Report of the expert: "The box with a green label that you submitted to me (20 patronen No. 403, fur die Mauser selbstlade pistole, calibre 7·63) should contain loaded cartridges. It contains every third row explosive dum-dum bullets, taken from special boxes marked with yellow labels. These bullets are rendered explosive in the making, and it is not possible to make them so by hand.

" (*Signed*) V. ROUSSEAU, Arms Expert."

war is that of superior strength, and even that power they have dishonoured by making it the slave of cruelty. What did they hope to do? To terrorise our soldiers? Their proud and steadfast courage is the answer! Let us not even hope to see them, even in avenging passion, act as their enemy has done. Their native nobility will prevent that. All that German methods will succeed in doing will be to make the Belgians more desperate in battle, more obstinate in their resistance. They know the Ideal in defence of which they are fighting, and the difference between their civilisation and German "Kultur." By seeing the enemy's instinctive cowardice and the manner in which he treats their brothers, they can imagine what treatment he would mete out to their wives, their mothers, their sisters and their little children; for, if the enemy's conduct is atrocious towards the combatants, what is it likely to be towards a defenceless and terrorised civil population?

III.



CHAPTER IV.

BY HIGH ROAD AND CAMP.

WHEN the Germans enter a village, their guns are levelled and their fingers are on the trigger, they look carefully at the houses as they pass, and greet with a volley of firing such inhabitants as dare to show themselves at their door-steps or windows. The superior officer then goes to the Town Hall, sends for the burgomaster and immediately requisitions what he desires. Meantime, the soldiers disperse through the streets and among the surrounding farms, break down doors that do not open quickly enough, maltreat the inhabitants, make their way immediately to the cellars, and then call for food. Others bring the leading citizens of the village to the commandant. These will serve as hostages. If a shot is fired, if the food requisitioned is not delivered in time, if the war tax is not paid, *if the Belgian army takes up an offensive position*

in the neighbourhood, these civilians will perish. Sometimes the priest, the lawyer, the doctor, are not enough. Then all the male population is collected and brought into some well-guarded enclosure ; suddenly from a side street comes the sound of a shot, or simply a German soldier exclaims that someone has fired. That is the signal for the pillage to begin. The officers have already, revolver in hand, broken open the public safes and the branch of the National Bank, if there happens to be one. Now it is the soldiers' turn, and they make good use of it. Shops are emptied, the poorest dwellings visited and pillaged. In the evening there is a bonfire and they burn, if not the whole village, at least several of the houses.

The poor people are too terror-stricken to protest. Were a man ready to defend his belongings, or his wife, even at the price of his own life, he dare not, knowing that others, bound within his sight, would have to pay for it. This calculation even cannot always be depended on, for the fate of the hostages does not depend on a real act, but on the will and pleasure of the enemy. Once within the Germans' hands, they can only trust to the providence of God.

Night falls and they sleep on chairs in the Town Hall or, if they are too numerous, on the cold stone floor of the church. Suddenly they are wakened. Is it to be shot or simply that some of them are wanted to accompany an officer through the village? Who knows? They have to suffer all the anguish of expecting death and of being the helpless playthings of an odious caprice. Should it enter their tormentor's head, they will be executed there and then. Possibly they will be made, as a preliminary, as happened at Wygmael and at Hervé, to dig their own graves. If there are too many of them to be shot down at one volley, they will use the mitrailleuse on them and they will be found later lying together in a heap in their congealed blood, or, as at Elewytt, on their knees with their hands still clasped, killed in the very attitude of supplication. Sometimes before killing them the Germans will make fun of them, as at Gelrode, where among the hostages shut up in the church were seven young men who were forced to go with the soldiers to a neighbouring café and there perform for their captors' amusement. At dawn, when the entertainment was over, they were struck with sabres and

killed. Perhaps they may not go so far as that. They may possibly only make them—as they did the Procurator of the King at Tongres—sweep the street, or the Town Hall, as they forced the Deputy and the Justice of the Peace to do in the same town. They will tie a rope round their necks to make them ridiculous and occasionally tighten it, thus compelling them to make amusing contortions ; they will drive them before their horses, as they did old M. de B., seventy years of age, who, at Francorchamps, had to go along the high road in front of a German major. Or, as they did at Hingeou, they may grant them their deliverance, on condition that they go escorted by soldiers to the commandant of the district in the neighbouring town and shout three times : “ Long live the Emperor ! ” More often they will take them through the fields from village to village, or along all the roads of the surrounding parish. For hours and sometimes days they will drive them like a flock of sheep to terrify, by their very fatigue and suffering, the peasants of the district. If they step on a side walk that might be easier to traverse, they are driven off it and forced to tramp through the mud. From time to time they will be

told that they are about to die and will be asked how they would prefer to die—seated, standing, or lying down. At other times their captors will pretend to shoot them, and with their rifles levelled they will address to them a series of coarse, ironical insults: “Take a last look at your beautiful country!” an officer will remark jeeringly, whilst another, seeing them falter, will burst into a delighted laugh. “Before you die, I am going to tell you a piece of good news to cheer you up: the Prince of Monaco has mobilised against us!” “We won’t do it this time,” a third will exclaim, raising his gun; “we must spin out the pleasure!” . . . And so the atrocious suspense will continue. They will make them remain on their knees for hours together, or throw them flat on their faces, with their feet and hands bound. Sometimes they will cut all the buttons off their clothes to force the men to hold their trousers up with their hands as they walk. They will strike them, if they do not advance quickly enough, as they did the venerable Archbishop of Tournai, aged eighty-seven, who was driven along the Ath road with the principal citizens of his town, and who when about to fall from fatigue

was stunned by a blow from a soldier's fist. If they meet another German regiment, their tormentors will not be ashamed of their rôle and the new-comers will jest, and, pointing at the hostages will call out "Vous fousillé! Fousillé vous!" Perhaps they may have to walk, like those from Montigny-sur-Sambre, between two rows of German soldiers who will beat them as they pass with the handle of their lances, or strike their faces till they bleed. If one of them escape, the others will pay for it as well as he: "Six men were on our right," relates the parish priest L., "and one of them, named Demay, aged eighteen, and rather timid, tried to escape. They shot at him three times. . . . And I learned afterwards from his mother, who eventually found his corpse, he had been shot in the hip and died for lack of attention to his wound in a barn to which he had dragged himself. Hearing the shots the captain returned and throwing himself on the other men on our right struck them in the face with his fist and beat their heads against the wall. He was so furious he could hardly speak and he ended by saying, 'And now, shoot the lot!' I saw the soldiers leading out the five men and I heard the shots."

They cannot think what fresh insults to invent. At Gilly-Hauchies, several witnesses affirm, "the Germans made us kneel, spat in our faces and threw water at us, while an officer and several soldiers walked round us, thrusting at us with their bayonets until several were wounded." Sabres, rifle butts and whips are not enough. All these weapons exhausted, they fall back on axes. Prisoners are submitted to an uninterrupted series of horrors and massacres. Let us consider for a moment this account given by a man of part of his forced tramp through the district: "A soldier struck me on the head with the butt of his rifle so violently that I was knocked senseless in the middle of the street. Then they dragged me to my feet. At Lodelinsart-Bon-Air I saw soldiers of the 10th Infantry Regiment kill a civilian who was in the passage of his dwelling. At Lodelinsart-Duchassis I saw the same soldiers seize an old man on his own doorstep and stun him with a blow from a rifle. At Lodelinsart-Caveau, opposite the château, the same soldiers shot two civilians, who fell immediately on the side walk. On the way to Bon Air, I was supporting an unfortunate old man who could scarcely walk; the Germans

took him from me, threw him brutally on the pavement and struck him. At the sluice gates of Couillet, they seized two men, dragged them out of the ranks and shot them beside the Sambre. Some yards further, under the same conditions, the Germans shot M. Alfred Georges, Alderman of Lodelinsart." Finally, when they have satiated them with horrors, they may send them back whence they came, only to find their houses destroyed or their village on fire, and there they will be released, amidst laughter and insults. That will not prevent their being recaptured two or three times—in spite of the papers given them to announce that they have been set free—by other regiments who have not yet had the pleasure of mocking their martyrdom.

Often, moreover, these sufferings will only be the preliminary to their calvary. Like six hundred inhabitants of Visé, like four hundred and fifty peasants of Lebbeke, like all the male population of numerous villages near Louvain, they will be taken to Germany. And as they tramp along in a dismal procession, they will see vanishing in the distance their village tower and will turn their steps, across their devastated

land, to the Unknown. If some cattle truck is ready, they will be flung into it pell-mell, where they will be joined by other miserable wretches captured in defiance of all law and driven towards this gehenna. "Among the civilians, what do I see?" said a witness on the way to Soltau, "but two little girls of twelve or thirteen and a little chap of about ten years of age, all clinging to a white-haired old man!" When they reach the camp of concentration to which they are taking them, they will see old men, harmless peasants and poor little schoolboys. That is the cowardly way in which the Prussians augment their total of prisoners of war.

For they call them prisoners of war. Civil prisoners being a thing unknown in civilised nations, they have simply baptized them prisoners of war, and care has even been taken to paint on their backs in white paint, "Kriegsgefangenen Münster, Kriegsgefangenen Senne, Kriegsgefangenen Soltau": they are marked like cattle in a pen. M. F., released from the camp of Soltau after several days in his quality of Mexican citizen, gives a most circumstantial account of the life of these poor people. In the barn where M. F. was sleeping, there

were six hundred and fifty, indiscriminately mixed together, with scarcely enough room to lie down. In the morning, they were wakened with various insults, of which the mildest was "cochon" and were struck with sticks. These sticks were constantly in use during the day. Cold, hunger and the most loathsome filth reigned everywhere. Punishments were given for a "yes" or a "no," or simply because the prisoners did not understand what the Germans said. He who disobeyed or, disgusted, refused the greasy watery soup was tied to a post in the middle of the court to inspire submission in the others. They began to lose heart. The prison was so horrible that one man hanged himself, while another—a Walloon, condemned because he did not understand German—went mad and had to be taken to the Lunebourg asylum. Priests suffered more insults than any of them. "Two of them," relates M. F., "the Abbé Beelaerts and the Curé Hacherelle, were subjected to such atrocities that an old prisoner, Consul of Russia in America, arrested the first day of the war and liberated in September, started a press campaign and thereby brought about an investigation of the Landtag of

Hanover. Thereupon officers came and forced all the poor wretches, under threat of blows, to sign a blank paper, doubtless a letter of protestation on their part." The treatment in the camp of Münster is just as inhuman. There were women too, and even children—some less than eleven years old. There also (the account is given by an escaped prisoner on whose faith we have every reason to rely) those who have not money to buy bread at the canteen have to endure the pangs of hunger. And there also, fire, light, cleanliness and hygiene are unknown. Men, suffering from tuberculosis, syphilis and infectious cutaneous diseases are indiscriminately mixed with the others. Two professors of the medical faculty of Louvain, who were interned there could give some interesting details. The filthy straw of these shelters is never changed and is infested with bugs. There also the poor wretches driven from their dwellings, sometimes in their slippers, and shirt-sleeves, can procure neither clothes nor shoes, and the priests are ridiculed and forbidden to say Mass. Blows, bad treatment, and insults reign supreme. "The soldiers," says the report of a peaceful hostage taken to Münster, a calm, impartial

witness—who several times does homage to the individual kindness of a particular German soldier—“the soldiers considered us as murderers and treated us accordingly. Insults, threats and blows were not spared, even to the old men. Bad treatment, privations and mental suffering, etc., had the effect of making several people completely insane. For the group of inhabitants from Wesemael and the surrounding districts, this had tragic consequences which cost many of them their lives; it would be both interesting and instructive to question members of this group.” That will be done—but when will these poor wretches return from their captivity? They are waiting, looking towards Europe which is making no practical demonstration of the indignation that she feels. There are thousands who call upon her. In the camp of Münster alone there have been at the same time as many as three thousand one hundred Belgian hostages. This figure has been quoted by Cardinal Mercier in his touching pastoral letter. From time to time one of them succeeds in escaping or is sent back to his village. He is forbidden to speak of his captivity; he comes back to his ruined home, broken in mind

and body. He dare tell nothing of the sights he has seen. Well might he whisper to those that question him, that like Dante he has come back from hell.

CHAPTER V.

THEIR PASTIMES WHEN IN OCCUPATION.

WHEN the principal inhabitants of the village have left, what happens to the others? Or if by any chance all the population remains, how are they made suffer? How do the soldiery and the officers billeted in the farms occupy their leisure? Let me mention a few of their pastimes.

The first is drinking. Drunkenness sharpens the imagination and opens up a vista of undreamed of cruelties. Alcohol deadens the mind of man and awakens the brute that is in him. Are facts needed? Thousands of cellars in Belgium have been emptied by this nation of drunken troopers. The first formality when they are in occupation of a town or village is to requisition wine. All the crimes related by the witnesses of the Belgian Inquest are preceded, followed and interrupted by the hiccoughs of those disciplined drunkards. The sickening odour of wine rises from my piles of documents, mingled with that of blood.

The officers permit collective drunkenness or set the example of individual drunkenness. Their bedrooms are strewn with glasses and flasks; the table of their Council Chamber of War is ornamented with champagne bottles. And the officers, like the men, leave a trail of empty bottles behind them. All who passed along the road from Louvain to Malines, in the end of August, found it bordered with bottles still half-full, from whose broken necks was escaping a black liquid as from the neck of a guillotined man. To give them drink is the only means sometimes of obtaining mercy from them. Even in the poor districts where the people have no more wine or never possessed any, they demand it just the same. At Tournai, the German soldiers ordered some shopkeepers to hand over one or two bottles of Malaga that was still in their possession, and which they were keeping for an invalid. They handed it over and the soldiers drank half of it, spat mouthfuls of the wine in their hosts' faces and then went away without as much as "Thank you"!

Such a disposition promises well for the civilians in the midst of whom they mean to amuse themselves. I say nothing here of the violations

of which I shall speak later on; for the moment I am keeping myself to their more honest amusements. They make those sufficiently terrible when they please. And, though they may vary in detail, shooting remains always the leading feature. The inhabitants believed, trusting to some proclamation sent out, that they could continue their daily life as usual; let them not be deceived, the Germans will spend their time in terrorising them. They will shoot the peasants because they run away or because they have remained. To show oneself openly or to be found hiding are equal crimes. I am not exaggerating: there are cases where an execution has taken place only because some man looked out of his window or went down into his cellar. Does a young man, as at Campenhout, look after them as they pass, he is shot! Should some girls, like the sisters Desmet, at Brusseghem, stop to watch a fire, they are fired at! Should an old man, as at Wolverthem, peacefully driving a cart, cross in front of them, they will kill him; or should a peasant, who had left his village before they came into it, return with his tools over his shoulder from work in the fields, they will welcome him by putting a bullet through his head.

At Averbode, during the firing, some farmers took refuge in their cornfields, and were mown down with a volley of firing. If the poor people do not yield to all their caprices, they know what awaits them, and the Germans take advantage of this terror to practise every licence, as at Hamoir and at Comblain-au-Pont, where some cavalymen amused themselves, after bathing in the Ourthe, by walking naked through the village.

Should the inhabitants, on the contrary, try to please them, the result may be just the same. They will often reward the kindness of their host by killing him, as they did the innkeeper Degend, at Tessenderloo, who was put against the wall and shot after he had waited on them, or, like the woman Vlamertinghe, whom they assassinated while she was cooking their meal. Have they by chance been commanded by their leaders to do no harm, they will make up for it by handing the task on to their successors, like the detachment which passed through Lubbeek and was housed by the innkeeper: "The innkeeper tells us," said the witness, Robert Van de Kerchove, "that the Prussians had been so pleased with his reception of them they had

shaken hands warmly with him when they left, calling him a worthy fellow. Before leaving, they wrote upon his door a 'good recommendation.' One of us went to see what he had put," adds the witness, "and read this sentence in German : 'The inhabitants in this village deserve no mercy. They have fired on the troops!'" For lack of some new invention of cruelty they will, as they did at Schaffen, break a man's arms and legs, or perhaps, as at Louveigné, where the officers indulged in a kind of pigeon shooting practice, command the soldiers to let loose the prisoners with the order to disperse, and fire on them as they run. At Battice, where they massacred several dozen men, they did not permit them to be buried until a week later. When some inhabitants have succeeded in saving from the pillage a few valuables, they will take a wicked pleasure in flinging, before their very eyes their title deeds and important papers into the burning houses, or pour petrol over them to burn them, as they did to the precious packets of papers that the family Devos of Alost were carrying away. Should one of their victims complain, they will finish him off like M. Cognon, of Visé, whom they mutilated with bayonet

thrusts and drove down to the water, where, his body ripped open, and holding in his entrails with one hand, he had to pull a boat with the other—until he died !

I can picture our peaceful villagers. I see them clustering round their church tower, if the tower is still standing. I see them bloodstained and terror-stricken amidst this suffering and ruin. I can picture the awful life of these poor mocked-at peasants—how they must start with terror at the least noise, with the constant feeling that their end may come at any moment, according to the will and pleasure of these wild animals. I can hear coming from their little shops and battered houses, and from their dim cellars, the sound of their stifled breathing ; in that tense silence more tragic than spoken words I see them oppressed with the sense of danger that is ever with them. How striking and beautiful are the simple words of the farmer of Buecken as he speaks of some of the episodes of this ceaseless agony. He was in a cellar with his brother, his servant and a farm labourer ; they hear the Germans coming nearer, closing round them and setting fire to the cottages : “ They entered the house shouting : ‘ Is everyone dead ? ’

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The poor people dare not move a muscle. Death seemed certain. We could feel her cold breath on our lips."

For months my whole country has been trembling beneath this frightful threat, and has felt on her lips the kiss of Death!

CHAPTER VI.

THEIR DEFIANCE OF THE ALMIGHTY.

As hostages, the Germans make use particularly of priests. As victims of their cruel amusements they are still more in demand. It is such a pleasure to insult them, for they do not answer back, and to strike them, for they turn the other cheek. Moreover, these heroes of *Gott mit uns* cannot resist the perverse joy of committing sacrilege. Let us take the account of their exploits in the village of F., and the ingenuity they show when it is a question of making the priests suffer. It is the curé himself who gives the following facts:—

“The Germans descended like a swarm on the village of F., on Tuesday, April 20th. They set fire to 190 houses, and 1,000 of the inhabitants are homeless. Twenty-two persons at least have been killed without any reason. Two men, named Macken and Loods, were buried alive before their wives’ eyes. The

Germans seized me in my garden, bound my hands behind me, and ill-treated me by every means in their power. They erected a gallows for me, saying they were going to hang me. One of them pointed to my head and my ears, and went through a pantomime of cutting them off. They forced me to stare at the sun for a long time. They broke the arms of the blacksmith, who was a prisoner with me, and then they killed him. At a given signal they forced me to enter the Burgomaster's house, which was burning, and then they took me out again. They went on like this all day long. Towards the evening they let me enter the church, saying that it was the last time that I should see it. At a quarter to seven they released me, the cavalrymen striking me with their whips as I passed. I was bleeding, and had fallen unconscious. I remember an officer raising me to my feet and ordering me to go away. A few yards off they fired at me. I dropped to the ground and lay there as if dead. That was my salvation. Before releasing me they had taken the Belgian flag and had torn it in shreds."

This dry, official report is as tragic as the crime itself, and there is something beautiful about this

man who has just related his own sufferings and the sufferings of his flock, adding with a burst of indignation, more wounded by that than by all the rest, how they insulted the flag of his country. The curé of F.'s case is not unique. The priests in the districts have all been used as examples. If hostages were needed they were the first to be seized. Arriving at Pin, one of the first villages that they came upon after having crossed the frontier of the Belgian Luxembourg, the Prussian commandant shouted: "We shall shoot all priests. We have already shot five!" And they carried out to the letter this abominable threat. The curé of Forêt was shot, also the parish priest of Olne. This is what happened to the curé of Haccourt. They seized him along with two of his parishioners, and as they were not walking quickly enough they bound them to a horse which was set off at a gallop. When the church was reached these men were but limp human rags, half dead already. They were then propped up against a wall and shot.

Let us take the account of the chaplain of Bouge. Seized in the presbytery, with one of his neighbours, they were bound together,

back to back, and pierced with bayonets. Take the curé of Spontin who was suspended sometimes by his feet and sometimes by his hands, stabbed by their lances and then shot. Monsieur Labeye, the curé of Trembleur, was preparing some poor wretches for death. They warned him he had better prepare himself as well. He continued his work of administration, asking permission to say Mass before he died. This happened on August 16th. As soon as Mass was said, he went, calm and dignified, to the cemetery where he was shot.

“Accompanied by the Abbés Zender and Jacques, both from his own parish, Monsieur Glouden, curé of Letours, had gone out to bring in the wounded near Ethe. He was acting on the very orders of the German commandant, who had provided him with a passport, but the officer who was in command at Ethe tore up the paper and flung away the scraps. However, he was allowed to finish his charitable task. When all the wounded had been put into the motor ambulance, the three helpers were ranged on the roadside, and, without any pretext, the order was given to fire the mitrailleuse on them and finish them with revolvers.” Such is the account

contained in a recent report from Belgium. In this same report we learn that the parish priest of Etbe was hanged from a telegraph post and M. Hottlet, curé of Alloux, and Abbé Docq perished in the massacre of Tamines. The second, finished off with blows from the butt of a rifle, was found with his head "beaten flat."

The curé of Roselies was accused of having fired at the soldiers. He appears before the Kommandantur and has no difficulty in clearing himself. His judges give him a paper and send him away. "Arriving at Roselies, confident in his innocence, he shows his papers to the German soldiers. They smile and shoot him. The paper bore an order for his death."

The curé of D'Acoz was murdered as he was reading his breviary. L'Abbé Schögel, curé of Hastière-par-delà, had taken refuge with his brother-in-law, M. Ponthière, Professor at the University of Louvain, and schoolmaster of the village, in the cellars of the neighbouring church of Hermeton; the Germans attempted to kill them by shooting through the airholes of the cellar. They escaped across the street and entered the school, where they were pursued by the officers, foaming with rage, and shot.

The Abbé Jean Wauters, of Pontbrûlé, succumbed after having tried to prevent a brute from ill-using an old, unarmed man. At Villiers-en-Fagne, a French Jesuit was officiating temporarily in the parish. They shot him in the presbytery, and then set fire to it. Near Dinant they shot Father Nicholas, premonstrant of the abbey of Lette, with two brothers from the same convent. Their white soutanes were dyed with blood. Their bodies were thrown into the Meuse. One of them was despoiled of his garments. "Indeed," says the witness, "officers amuse themselves by dressing up in the garments of the premonstrants whose monastery they have pillaged."

Many false premonstrants were seen in automobiles near Dinant, and an officers' dinner was even waited on by a soldier dressed up as a premonstrant.

At Blauwput the condemnations to death brusquely interrupted the preparations of a meal for the German soldiers. A brother of the Christian School was dragged from the kitchen and made to accompany a Capuchin father before an already bloodstained wall.

The curé of Bovenloo was shot as he was

leaving his church. His corpse was left lying on the door-step. "The curé of Gelrode, in all probability," says Cardinal Mercier, "has died a martyr's death." He was commanded if he wished to be spared to renounce the Catholic faith; he chose rather to die, and he died in agony. "I saw him," said a witness, "arriving in Aërschot on August 24th with three wounded men." The Germans took him to the Town Hall, where they ill-treated him. Next day they led him before the church and struck him with the butts of their rifles until his hands were bleeding; then he was taken to the bridge of the Demer, where he was shot. His body lay there until the next day, when it was thrown into the river."*

The curé of Yvoir—an old man—was forced to accompany the German troops for miles—to Mariembourg laden with the soldiers' haversacks and frequently struck with their rifles. The old curé of Saint-Gery was arrested at dawn. He had to run in his slippers past the cavalrymen, who prodded him with the points of their

*Another witness, Marie Tielemans, saw at Aërschot the curé of Gelrode before his church "standing on his tiptoes, his hands raised and his head leaning against the wall."

sabres, and who were finally going to rip his body open when a Catholic officer interfered. . . . The curé of Sorinnes was shut up with his parishioners in the church of Leignon. They made him recite the Stations of the Cross—was he himself not climbing his own Calvary?—and whilst he was praying, they spat at him. A Jesuit father from Florennes was literally handed over by an officer, whom he was serving as guide in the village, to four soldiers and under-officers, who tore off his soutane, beat him, threw him into a cellar, and left him there for dead. Brother R., of the Christian Schools, escaping from the burning town of Louvain, was brutally seized in the fields with a group of ecclesiastics, among whom were Canon Noël, university professor, the curé of Saint-Joseph, and the holy father of the monastery of Scheut. They were flung into a barn, from which they could hear the officers declaring that they were going to kill all the priests of Louvain. Hardly had this sinister threat been uttered than they were sent for and flung into a pigsty from which the pig had just been removed. There they were stripped naked: all that they had in their pockets was stolen and their breviaries flung on to a dung-

heap. . . . They frequently forced the priests to be present when they violated women. They arrested those who were bearing the Host. They used the sacred linen in the churches for the most profane purposes. Besides striking them, imprisoning and insulting them, they profaned their churches and forced open the receptacles in which the consecrated vessels were kept. They stabled their horses in the sanctuaries, whose tombs and altars they had broken, they flung to the winds, on which the tears and sighs of the people also were borne, the relics of their saints, as at Hastière-par-delà, where were kept the precious remains of the Virgins of Cologne, which had been respected even by the Iconoclasts of the great Revolution. These were now scattered and trodden under foot.

The members of the clergy are never safe. As in the worst days of the Terror, they are always suspected. In certain districts their presence is forbidden. "For more than eight days," declares a monk of Louvain, "we have had to fly the country, disguised, because they are particularly severe on priests." At Tongres once they forced them to put on civilian costumes.

If they are led round the towns and villages with other hostages, they are made the object of their oppressors' most insulting attentions. A parish priest of Hainaut describes one of these miserable processions: "At Couillet, a soldier dragged me from the ranks and struck me a violent blow in the face, calling me 'Schwein.' Further on, an officer gave me a blow over the head with his whip, and again another flourished his sabre before me and tried to stab me!" If they form part of a convoy that is taking prisoners to Germany, they are placed well in evidence, at the open door of the waggon, to receive, at the Prussian stations where they stop, the choicest insults. "At Aix," writes the curé of Rotselaer, who was making notes of these infamies, "an officer came up to me and spat in my face." When they reach their destination—we already have evidence of this—the most dreadful and degrading treatment of the camps will be reserved for them, as in the case of the professor of a theological college, who—after having on the way endured the pangs of hunger and been freely exposed to the insults in the Protestant villages they passed—was employed, on arriving at his destination to clean out the

stables. "One day," says a witness, "they took him to the riding practice ground, where he was told to run as quickly as he could. At every round he was struck with the butt of a rifle." At the fifth round this martyr, at the mercy of those wild beasts, fell in the arena, spitting up blood. . . . What does it matter to the enemy if, whilst they are torturing their priests, whole villages are being deprived of the consolation of religion! "I can still hear," says Cardinal Mercier, "the sad voice of an old man who answered when I asked him if he had heard Mass on Sunday within his damaged church: 'For two months we have not seen a priest.' The curé and the parish priest were in a concentration camp at Münsterlager." The enemy knows well how much their religion means to our Flemish people, who live in the daily practice of it. Wishing to deprive them of everything so as to increase their suffering, he would even deprive them of their God! When he does not immediately separate a pastor from his flock, it is often so as to make the separation more cruel in the long run. The curé of Buecken, old M. de Clerck, aged eighty-three years, seeing the inhabitants of his village led

away, begged to be allowed to accompany them. They took him, but before they had gone far they tied him to a cannon. And when at last they untied him, it was only to drag him on the ground by his feet, his head bumping on the hard paved roads. At the limit of his endurance, the old man cannot keep back this tragic supplication: "Kill me outright! I would rather die!..." Our Father in Heaven seems to turn a deaf ear to our earthly sufferings. Will He at last hear through that thick impenetrable wall, that seems to separate Him from us, the cry that our Christian people and His tortured priests are sending up to heaven? Will He not condemn him in whose name these crimes are committed—and who dares to shelter himself behind the name of the Almighty?

CHAPTER VII.

THEIR OUTPOSTS.

WE cannot get away from the pathos of the inhabitants of the little towns and villages. We have seen how the Germans make these poor wretches suffer through interfering with them in the free practice of their religion. Why should they hesitate therefore to make them suffer through the other form of worship, the love for their native country? Imagining what the horror of this moral torture must be to men possessed of refined feelings, they once more violate those laws of war in which our poor peasants placed their trust, and relentlessly and systematically wound their patriotism by forcing them to serve against their own country. Everywhere they are employed in the trenches; silenced by the revolver levelled at their heads, but with their hearts burning with indignation they are compelled to obey. The

powerful corporations of the bigger towns can declare that their members would rather die of hunger than work for Germany, and they can shelter themselves behind the salutary fear that they inspire ; but the isolated villages can do nothing and do not dream of resisting. They serve as guides for the army, or are made use of to carry loads or drive carts. The Inquest of the Prosecuting Magistrates of Oudenarde describes how civilians were made use of by the German troops from Hainaut, Artois and Picardy as far as Saint-Quentin and Compiègne. By abominable methods of extortion they extract military information from those who are left behind. The Germans send men from the village of Haecht to Malines to see if the Belgians are there : if they do not come back, or, on their return, if they do not tell the truth, their wives and children, kept as hostages, will be shot. . . . But they perform useless acts of cruelty through sheer hate. Taking with them, from Quaremont, a lad of seventeen, called Maurice Vandewiele, they forced him to put on a German uniform and took him away thus clad, simply to hand him over to the first Belgian patrol, that they should come to. In a hamlet in the district

of Liège a schoolmaster was called upon not only to deliver up all maps in his possession but to trample under foot the Belgian flag. His refusal cost him his life.

Another way in which they make the Belgians serve against their own country is this: Regiments of the enemy drive the inhabitants of the villages before them when they go to battle. At Tirlemont, a military chaplain, Abbé de Spot, was seized along with a number of civilians to be used in such a manner. Judge G., of Eppeghe, states how the whole male population of the little town was taken away to act as a shield for the troops. The witness Antoine, from his house on the high road to Charleroi, at Mont-sur-Marchienne, saw a detachment of cavalry coming from Charleroi, driving before them two hundred men with their hands up. If they are old and pitiable, so much the better. "Scenes have taken place here that baffle description," writes a German officer in his diary; "weeping women whose husbands have been forced to accompany us, or children whose fathers have been led away, crying bitterly all the while, implore mercy, *old persons who cannot walk are wheeled in barrows*. And so the march goes on

till we reach the trenches. . . . Here all their eyes are bound and they are sent forward in the direction of the enemy. . . . " When they come face to face with the Belgians, should they try to fling themselves on the ground, as they did at Alost, to allow their brothers to shoot on the enemy behind them, a German bullet kills them instantly from behind. No slight engagement takes place, or a march from one point to another, in which this monstrosity has not been adopted. It is classic. It forms part of the German military training. When the invaders crossed the district of Charleroi and Mons towards France, where their movements were watched at every turn of the road by the French rearguards, this was the order of their formation: At the head came the cyclists, then a few infantrymen in open formation, then a body of a hundred civilians, then the main body of infantry, the ammunition waggons and gun carriages, and, lastly, a body of three hundred civilians, surrounded by a rope that the men on the outside of the group held in their hands. The ridiculous appearance of such a procession should be a punishment for this army of cowards ! But the real suffering is too terrible for us to see the

ridiculous side of this heartrending spectacle ! On the high road, the parish priest of M. watches passing all through the night long columns of soldiers mixed with defenceless civilians, picked up on the way, and he describes the horror, in the darkness, of this miserable, weary cavalcade of women and children trudging along between the advancing battalions. They feared that the French engineers in the neighbourhood might blow up a bridge ; and the parish priest saw a trembling group of women and children standing on it. Taken away in the morning himself, he states that they were still there on his return : " As we came near the bridge," he said, " I met a group composed of eight nuns of the Order of Sainte-Marie, my sister, her daughter, and another woman. They were coming back from the bridge of the Sambre, where they had been forced to stand so as to prevent its being destroyed. The other women and children, who spent the night there, were still there." On reading the innumerable statements regarding this type of atrocity, we realise that the Germans made use of women especially. On August 25th, having collected in the neighbourhood all the women and little children that they could on

the bridge of Livers, they then made them march in front of their troops. On August 29th, at Hérent, M. P. counted about five hundred women and children who, preceded by the curés from Wygmael and Wesmael, were advancing with their arms bound in front of the army. At Sempst, on August 24th, they entered the cellars, drove out the women with rifle blows and ranged them in front of their regiments. "We were struck at on all sides," says a woman named Nys. "About thirty of us were then placed against three houses that are on the bridge of the Senne, and we had to remain with our hands up from five o'clock till half-past eleven in the morning. We were then thrown into a ditch, fortunately dry, near the bridge. Then I lost consciousness and lay there for some time. When I came to myself I remember hearing them saying that we were all to be shot, and they threatened us with their revolvers. Towards mid-day they sent us all away." This quotation goes beyond the fact that I wished to bring out, but does it not well illustrate the cruel habits of these barbarians? Sergeant Bulcke, of the 24th Company of Infantry, who was in command of a military station near Termonde, observed

three ladies and two young girls among the fifteen civilians that were being driven in front of a detachment of the enemy. Women from Micheroux had to march, urged forward at the point of the bayonet, to the attack on the fort of Fléron. In a village in the neighbourhood of Ghent, where I happened to be before the taking of Antwerp, a peasant from Hofstade came running one day, mad with terror, driven from his village by the horror of what he had witnessed there. He had seen his wife seized by the German soldiers, stripped naked, and then driven forward at the point of their bayonets towards the Belgian lines, who dared not fire, until at last she fell down dead at the feet of her tormentors. Alderman V. L., of the village of L., stated before the Members of Inquest, that on August 16th he was forced by a German outpost to march before them with his hands up, accompanied by his daughter, whom the soldiers had stripped naked. The girl herself, trembling with shame, confirmed the fact before the Procurator of the King at X., who cross-examined her, and she added: "Such awful things happened to me that I dare not tell them."

CHAPTER VIII.

THEIR RESPECT FOR WOMEN.

WE are right in supposing that this cowardice towards women is accompanied by other cowardly excesses. Before the pillage of Andenne, they made all the fathers and mothers come out of the houses; then the soldiery entered the rooms and violated the young girls who were left there helpless and alone. But, as a rule, they proceed even more cruelly: they do not send away the parents or the husbands, they merely put them out of all possibility of interfering and make them the unwilling spectators of the outrage being perpetrated on their wives or daughters. At Aërschot, a girl living in the Chaussée de Louvain was violated by eighteen Germans before the eyes of her father, who was bound hand and foot. A revolver held at her head rendered her powerless to resist. Her brother-in-law, also bound, after having been present at the assassination of his

two children, was forced to watch the violation of his own wife ; then he was sent to Germany. At Wacherzeel, under the same conditions, seven Germans first seduced a woman and then killed her. At Meysse, one night in August, a soldier entered Farmer D.'s house, ransacked it, and found M. D.'s sister-in-law and a young girl, Marie D., asleep in bed. He undressed and tried to get into bed between the two women. One succeeded in escaping but the other was brutally violated. " I was stopped, " says Madam P., of Gelrode, " as I was going for water for the cows. Four men threw themselves on me and two of them tried to violate me. I was able to defend myself, and these two went away, but the two others both seduced me, the one holding me while the other violated me. They ill-treated me and *threatened to take away my child!* " On September 11th, at Renaix, the woman S., alone in her house with her four children, was violated while a revolver was held at her breast. At Hody, a mother was cynically outraged before her children's eyes. At Heyst-op-den-Berg, Marie V. was violated by some soldiers while her little brothers and sisters were all the time clinging to her skirt trying to rescue her.

At Blauwput, on August 19th, a woman, A., obviously enceinte, was for two hours at the mercy of some Germans, who left her in such a condition that she had to be carried back to her house. On August 20th, at Corbeek-Loo, ten soldiers seized a couple named L. and their daughter of sixteen; they took them to the château of M. Frantzen, forced the child to drink, covered the parents with their revolvers, and threw themselves on their helpless little victim on the lawn. She resisted, and was only overpowered after five bayonet thrusts. "She was in the gravest condition," adds her uncle, a notable merchant of Louvain, who was relating these facts to the Commission, "and the curé of the parish administered Holy Communion to her, saying that he did not think it was possible she could survive." "At Héverlé, the wife of a prison guardian was odiously maltreated by a Red Cross ambulance worker," says Principal Dr. X., who picked up the unfortunate woman. On August 26th, the 48th Regiment of Infantry Reservists, commanded by M. von Bieverstein, occupied Elewyt. Several notable citizens' daughters, aged sixteen or seventeen, were violated, while their parents were overpowered

and intimidated. The servant of the parish priest of A. was defending herself against the brutes—they ended by flinging her into the water and drowning her. At Montigny, a mother and her daughter were found in a tank violated and almost naked. In the neighbourhood of Montaigu, where hundreds of women (on the testimony of M. J., given on September 26th) met the same fate, a farmer of Keyberg was struck with the butts of their rifles for endeavouring to protect his wife; then he and his children were bound with ropes while the Germans, from nine o'clock at night till six the next morning, misused the poor woman, who called ceaselessly for help ! At Buecken, near Herent, after a horrible massacre, the men of the village were tied to the guns, and their wives outraged before their children with bayonets held at their breasts. The next day a general, without in any way reprimanding his men, sent the poor creatures towards the Belgian lines : “ We shall not kill you,” he laughed ; “ we shall leave that to your own friends to do.” And, under a veritable hail of shrapnel, they had to fly towards the Belgian artillery posted at Malines. At Beyghem, men from thirty to thirty-five years of age, who had

just been burning three churches, and among whom, directing affairs, was the Over-lieutenant Kumer, took their prey, a young, helpless girl, to the presbytery, and misused her before the curé's sisters and the curé himself, whom they stripped and forbade to shut his eyes or turn away his head; I pass over many disgusting details. And indeed one cannot dwell long on this subject, the facts of which are daily increasing *ad infinitum* in a crescendo of ignominy. The magistrates and the members of the Commission state, however, that every effort is being made by many of the victims to keep these horrible facts secret. And perhaps the most criminal offences—those committed by officers on girls of the upper classes, so much less able than the others to defend themselves—in houses where they have been billeted and have lived as guests, or those of which the victims have been the poor nuns in the convents: perhaps such horrible deeds are destined, by the desperate attempts being made to conceal them, never to be revealed.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD MEN AND LITTLE CHILDREN.

WE realise to the full, in learning of such attacks as these, the refinement of cruelty that the Germans sometimes employ, their barbarous love for attacking those who are weak and helpless and prolonging their sufferings. The victims, who were shot outright, and of whom there are thousands, were for the most part able-bodied men; and even these at times were the object of odious cruelties. "At Montigny we found," witnesses state, "the stump of a man's body that the Germans had bound to his bed before setting fire to his house." At Waret-l'Evêque, before shooting a hostage, M. Chavé, the Uhlans first cut off his hands. At Jurbise a man named André Vreux was deliberately mutilated with sabres. At Erenbodeghem the soldiers bound the two brothers Temmerman to an automobile, and dragged them face downwards along the

road all through the village. At Sempst, some infantrymen on their way to Antwerp, seized a butcher's knife; they threw themselves on a servant who was passing, cut off his legs, then his head, and flung what remained of him into a burning house. At Lebbeke-les-Termonde, the man named Franz Mertens, with his comrades Vandooren, Dekinder, Stobbelaer, and Wryer, were bound to each other by their arms; their eyes were hollowed out with a sharp instrument and then they were killed. The other men who perished in the village were all, except two, massacred or finished off by means of bayonets or axes. "I can assure you that such is the case," says the magistrate's report. "Witnesses were present at the massacre and heard the cries of the victims without a single shot being mingled with the groans of the dying, and I have personally observed among the corpses some with their shoulders cut away, while others had their bodies ripped open or parts of their faces torn off. With every one of those poor wretches we have had to establish their identity, by going through their pockets. It was impossible to recognise them, so terribly were they disfigured."

But, as a rule, those upon whom they inflict suffering, for the pleasure of watching them die slowly, are old men, women, young boys, and little children. . . . Arriving at Averbode, on August 20th, the Uhlans saw a woman who, terrified, was hiding in a ditch : they amused themselves by killing her with their lances. A mile away, at Schaffen, they ripped open the body of a young girl of twenty. The peasants around Louvain, who fled to Antwerp on September 12th, relate how, at Wilsele, the Germans tried to burn alive a woman named Van Kriegelingen and her eleven children. " The woman herself and eight children were burned to cinders, two managed to escape, but the last one was shot in the street ; we saw the dead bodies of the mother and the children, and we were present at the shooting of the other little one." General Deruette, aide-de-camp to King Albert, saw, at Hofstade, the dead body of an old woman pierced by ten bayonet wounds : she was still holding in her hand the needle and thread with which she had been sewing. In the same village a peasant woman was looking for a young girl who had disappeared : she eventually found her hanged from a tree. The volunteer gunner,

De R., unpinned from the ground the dead bodies of a woman and her child who were fixed to it by bayonets. Questioned as to what took place at Boortmeerbeek, Dr. V., of Malines, makes the following statement: "The woman Van Rollegen came to the hospital from Malines, on August 22nd. On Thursday, the 20th, when flying from Boortmeerbeek with her husband, she was shot twice in the leg. She then threw herself into a ditch for safety. Some moments later, the Germans, who had fired on her, came up and inflicted some horrible wounds on her left side and left forearm. She remained in this condition without help until Saturday evening. By that time the wounds had become infected and were swarming with worms." On the night of August 23rd some soldiers knocked loudly at the door of the Château de Canne, belonging to M. Poswick. Madame Poswick opened the door. She was immediately stunned by blows from their rifles. M. Derrickx, the permanent Deputy of Limbourg, who had taken refuge in the château, came to the door carrying a child in his arms: he was promptly stabbed with twenty lances. On Sunday, August 30th, a patrol of hussars, by way of Sunday amusement, fired in the

Chauss'er de Bruxelles, at Malines, on a woman of seventy-four, Catherine Van Kerchove, taking care to wound her without killing her : one shot carried off her right hand, another split open her cheek. At Battice, before setting fire to the houses, the Germans made all the women go in and shut the doors. At Barchon the woman Lieutenant and her children, one five years of age and the other only a few months old, were burned to cinders under the same circumstances. At Francorchamps, the first village between the frontier and Verviers, some Uhlans asked for coffee ; whilst Madame Bovy, aged sixty, was hastening to pour it out for them, they flung her on a dung-heap, face downwards, and killed her. In this same village they behaved disgracefully to a young girl, Fernande Legrand, who was flying with her little child in her arms. She was finally stabbed. " When the Germans entered Hastière," says Mgr. Carton de Wiart, " a woman was seated with her two children by the roadside ; she was wounded in five places, two of the wounds made by revolver shots and three with bayonets, one of which had pierced her right breast. For six hours she lay there bleeding to death."

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The witness Boudin, a refugee in the South, whose statement was made before the French authorities, saw the Germans at Herstal, on August 7th, beating a woman with a child in her arms. The Reformé soldier Marchal, questioned under the same conditions, stated that when on scout duty between Diest and Aërschot, he saw three Uhlans come out of a house. The patrol he was with killed them. Inside the house they found a woman bound to a table with ropes, her clothes raised, showing her limbs badly cut and running with blood. Before the Sub-Commission in London Corporal De Ruyter states that he saw at Sempst the dead bodies of a young man and woman bound to a tree ; they had only been married a week. At Alost the German soldiers burned the house of Franz Dewit, in which his wife, who had but given birth to a child that morning, was lying in bed. They were quite aware of this, having that very day searched the house and entered the room where she lay. At Louvain, a woman in childbirth, was shot through the head, whilst her husband was carrying her away. The poor man laid the corpse on the ground and fled with his children. When he had taken them to a

place of safety he came back and found that the dead woman's head had been battered in. At Thy-le-Château the soldier Possaert saw a woman bound to the wheel of a waggon, still alive but unconscious ; she was naked and had been frightfully maltreated. During the grim walk that the Louvain hostages made round their burning city the horrible sights seemed endless. "I remember particularly," states a notable citizen at Louvain, "seeing the corpse of a young woman, almost naked, her hair burned and the skin of her arms scorched. Her limbs were contorted in the frightful way that reminded one of the dead bodies of Pompeii." "Further off," says a second witness, "another house was burning ; on the doorstep lay the half-burned bodies of a man and a woman. The woman was lying on one side, her body ripped open, her entrails hanging out, and her left arm raised to shield her eyes from the horrible scene before her. The face had an expression of agony and fear impossible to describe." This woman, like so many others, had been burned alive.

Sometimes, having killed the men of the house, the women are spared, but under such conditions that they would rather have died. At

Retinne, a woman, after having seen her husband shot before her very eyes, was forced by the soldiers to step over the bleeding body that they had just flung on the ground. In a house, near Andenne, a woman had to serve at table her husband's assassins ; every time she came near them having to step over his dead body. Sometimes they seem only to spare these poor women in order to break their hearts. At Francorchamps M. d'Archambeau, who was wounded, crawled down to the cellar with his wife, his sister-in-law, and their children. Finally the house caught fire. Hearing through the air-holes voices calling for help, some soldiers and a young officer, from twenty to twenty-two years of age, ran up, helped them carefully out of the cellar, and then, when the women were safe, in spite of their entreaties and before their eyes, the young officer fired his revolver at M. d'Archambeau's head as he was coming out and killed him mercilessly. Sometimes they will grant their prayers after they have knelt, humiliated themselves and entreated the brutes long enough to please them. Witnesses describe long awful nights when all that could be heard in the villages were the sobs and supplications of the women ! It is

so easy to torture them when they are begging for mercy ! Let us take this statement made by the woman P., who found herself in their power ; they amused themselves with her suffering, and perhaps with her simpleness. “ They took my child away from me, saying they were going to make soup of him. They stripped him and put him on the table beside two naked swords, telling me that I must cut him up. Thankfully a bugle call sounded somewhere and stopped their going further.”

Old men, too, afford good sport. “ How many old men have been killed or wounded ! ” exclaims a magistrate of Hainaut, in a report concerning the district of Charleroi. At Couillet four old men were killed, three at Bouffioulx, and three at Farciennes. An old man of seventy-seven was assassinated at Monceau-sur-Sambre. At Francorchamps M. Derlet, aged seventy, who had just placed buckets of water on the road for the Germans’ horses, was killed outright by way of thanks. Near Molenstede an old man of ninety-eight was trying to protect his outraged daughter ; they bound him to the trunk of a tree, piled straw round his feet, set fire to it and burned him alive. At Herent an octogenarian was bound

to his chair and then his head split open. At Mouland an advocate from Liége saw the body of an old man dug up; he had been buried alive the day before. Thirty Uhlans entered the house of an old peasant named De Poorter, at Quaremont, and demanded forage for their horses. When they had been given all that he had they kicked him against the wall. Four soldiers standing near him held a sort of council of war; then they told him that he would not be shot but merely beaten! They forced him to go to his orchard, fifty yards away. De Poorter, scarcely able to walk, fell several times beneath the blows that rained on him unceasingly. Then they flung him on the ground and two men, one with a whip handle and the other with an iron cane that the leader of the band had given him, struck their victim until he lost consciousness. The man Lens, of Thildonck, was speaking with some neighbours on his door-step. Some Uhlans arriving unexpectedly on the scene fired on him and wounded him. His son Arnold laid him down for a moment and went to find some water to give him to drink. When he returned he found his father had been finished off with a bayonet. "When the Germans arrived at Wesemael,"

says a poor man, "I took refuge in a pigsty, because, being old and infirm, I could not escape. Two soldiers found me and tried to drag me out. Seeing that I was unable to walk, they bound my hands behind my back and threw me back into the sty. There I remained from Monday till Wednesday without food. A neighbour of eighty-two at last found me and set me free." "Among the civil prisoners from Wilder," says another witness, "there was one poor wretch, Jean Volkaerts, an imbecile from birth, and another Louis Hendrix, eighty years old, blind and frail. They could not follow quickly enough; so near the château of Wilder the Germans led them out of the ranks thirty yards away across the fields. Without giving any explanation two soldiers and an officer approached them. The officer called, 'Fire!' and they both fell dead. Then the soldiers went away without ever looking back."

I can scarcely go on. And yet it must be done, and striking examples taken here and there from this bloodstained list of horror. It is a ghastly task, but to give some idea of the martyrdom of a whole nation certain facts must be exposed, though I sometimes soften their crudity.

And now let us examine the oppressors' method of dealing with little children.

"Which is the way to Ghent?" the officer in command of a patrol asked a little boy from Tenrath. The poor little creature did not know German, and replied: "I do not understand." To punish him, they cut off his two hands, which bleed so severely that he dies. The Commission have not retained this fact in their reports because it is only testified to by one witness, yet this witness is well worthy of trust. At Werchter, on August 27th, M. Vincent Ernst de Bunswyck, Belgian Consul in Uganda, saw floating in the water beneath a bridge the corpse of a little victim of twelve. On the night of August 25th Count H. de Hemptinne, a volunteer, picked up near Malines the body of a boy under fourteen years old, covered with sword wounds. At Hofstade a lad of fifteen was found, his hands tied behind his back, and his body horribly mutilated. "I saw in this same district," states General Deruette, "the corpse of a child who had been killed while he was begging for mercy. His body was still in that attitude." "I saw at Hallembaye," writes M. C., State Engineer, in his report, "five wretched civilians, horribly

mutilated, with their hands bound, that the brutes of soldiers were dragging along to bring before a body of officers ; I shall never forget the sight of a poor little cowherd of thirteen or fourteen, whose cheek was pierced with a bayonet wound, and whose arms were running with blood." Among the wounded at Roselies there was a lad of fifteen and a little girl of eleven ! On August 26th, at Campenhout, a child, Livinus Van Halle, aged nine, was following a group of women who were being driven away ; the soldiers sent a bullet through his leg. " At Nieuwenrode," states Count Adrien Van der Burch, " we saw a cart with peasants arriving. In the cart were two children, a little boy and a girl of fifteen, both killed. The cart was quietly leaving the village when a soldier had fired on it." A girl of fifteen, who had escaped from Malines, was flying towards Louvain when they killed her on the way. The son of M. Cailleaux, of Montigny, was shot through the chest by a German whilst his father was speaking to an officer near by. On September 8th, at eight o'clock in the morning, a farmer from Quatrecht was arrested with his two sons. They bound him to a tree opposite his house and killed one of

his children before his eyes. The other, who was only wounded, was thrown, also before his father's eyes, into a barn to which they set fire. Near Izel, two young boys were watching the Uhlans passing; they were seized and made to run with their arms bound between galloping horses. Their dead bodies were found an hour later in a ditch with their knees "literally worn away," so a witness says; one had his throat cut and his chest split open, and both were shot in the head. On the way from Louvain to Malines a young man, whom they had taken prisoner, did not walk quickly enough to please them, they struck him; in despair he threw himself into the canal; when his head reappeared on the surface the Prussians amused themselves by using it as a floating target. At Schaffen a young man was bound to a shutter soaked with petrol and burned alive. At Rethy little Marie Van Herck, and at Testelt a little girl of twelve, were both assassinated. At Wacherzeel a young boy was stripped to the waist, and they amused themselves by pricking his slender body with the points of their swords: poor little innocent Saint Sebastian, a child martyr! At Bertrix a young brother

and sister were killed, and, after committing the crime, the Germans stripped the bodies and laid them on the ground together in a vile attitude, and then went away laughing; for such infamous sacrilege even does not make them ashamed !

"At Ans," relates a man from Liège, "I saw a little boy of six playing with a toy pistol. He cried: "Attention! Fire!" A German soldier, seeing the child playing at soldiers, shot him dead. One game is as good as another. "The Germans captured me with my little boy," states the witness Ollevier. "On the evening of our first day of captivity three officers came and took my child from me. They kept him for two hours and brought him back, telling me that he had something to remember the Germans by. His nose and the thumb of one hand were burned by a lighted cigar. These were officers bearing the number fifty-nine. They were men between thirty-five and forty. They took the child into the wood. They were drunk. He was only three years old. . . ." Oh ! the pathos of this inarticulate suffering !

Even the tiny mites do not escape the general carnage. On the contrary, they are regarded

as choice victims—they cannot defend themselves. At Testelt, on August 18th, the body of an infant named Deneef, two years old, was picked up, shot through the head. Little Deckers, the child of a neighbour and scarcely any older, met with the same fate. Not far from there, at Betecom, the lieutenant of artillery, Lemaire, found in a dry well the bodies of a woman, a man, and a child, the father still holding the little one passionately clasped to his breast. The soldier Gervais saw near Lummen, in a ditch, a child with its entrails hanging out. In the village of Kelfs, at Herent, the Prussians violently attacked the Valkenaerts' family: father, mother, children, nephews and nieces, all were killed or wounded. Among the dead I note Emile Valkenearts fourteen years old, Jeanne seven, and Jules two! "Near Liége," declares the witness Fernand Mary, "I met a woman escaping from her house, half-naked, carrying her child; a soldier cut off the child's head and walked beside the mother holding it up before her eyes." At Montigny-sur-Sambre a soldier forced a mother to throw her little baby of eighteen months into a tank in the rue de Gilly. Three children, one of whom, only five months

old, was in his mother's arms, were killed at Farciennes. In the early days of October Sergeant Delille was sent on patrol duty to Zillebeke; he visited the different houses one after another with his men to drive out the Germans who were billeted there. He wakened one soldier who was sleeping with his clothes, his arms, and his knapsack scattered all around him. "On examining the contents of the knapsack," says the sergeant, "we found the hand of a little child, two or three years old. It had been cut off above the wrist. In our wrath we asked the German, 'Was it you that did this?' And on his admitting it we shot him." It was a soldier of the Landwehr. On October 20th, on the Yser, after an attack on Pervyse, six prisoners were made and duly searched: on one of them were found the hands of two children. German fathers shamelessly carry home these glorious trophies. Was one not seen proudly marching to battle with a child's little body on the point of his bayonet?

And it is not fanaticism that is their motive, the desire to exterminate; it is the pleasure, the sheer pleasure, of cruelty. All their barbaric instincts come out in the following incident.

It was General Baron de Stein d'Altenstein who made the following statement to the Commission on September 18th: "The woman, Barbara Verbandert, wife of Jean-Franz Dewit, of Humbeek-lez-Wolverthem, tells me that the Germans this morning published a warning that all the inhabitants must leave the village by ten o'clock. She set out therefore with her six children, three in the first cart and three with herself in another. The first cart was more than a hundred yards ahead when, as they were approaching the Chapel Saint-Roch, shots were heard near by, and two of the children, Jean and Florentine, aged ten and six, were killed. The brains of the eldest were blown out and lay on the ground beside his little cap. The driver fled with the cart containing the dead bodies, and when the second vehicle passed, the Germans, before the mother's eyes, kicked on one side the cap and the débris of the child's brain, shouting: '*Belgische Bluth! Belgische Bluth!*' The mother called out to them that it was the head of her child and they answered: 'Rubbish! *It is a horse's!* and flung it into the hedge. . . . The dead bodies having been taken to Raemdonck, I had them examined by Dr. Van Wien,

of the 3rd Company of Light Infantry, who believed, without being certain, that the wounds had been made by *dum-dum* bullets and had them taken to the Infirmary of Willebroek to be examined."

Belgische Bluth! It is only a horse's! The coarse German joke is typical of these men's cruelty. Their low minds delight in it, and their officers are not one whit better than the simple soldiers. At Louvain a young woman went up to an officer: "Monsieur, I have children, I want to save them from this burning town!" And the officer replied, with a smile, in his best French: "Ah! you have children, have you, madame? Well, I have none so it is all the same to me!"

And before I close this chapter of horrors let me give one last example of the refinement of their cruelty: In a town that they were sacking, the Baroness de X. was kept in one house whilst on the other side of the square her own house—in which her children had been left—was burning. Freed at last, she fled through the streets of the town and found her four little children with a servant, trembling with fear because of the flames, standing on the

steps of a public monument ; she clasped them to her breast, and through the ruins and flames fled towards the country, carrying the youngest in her arms, the servant following with the two others. She reached the fields, near the village where the day before her château had stood. Her strength failing her, she appealed to a Prussian officer who was passing : " Monsieur, can I go home ? Has my house not been destroyed ? " " Not in the least," gallantly replied the lieutenant. " Let me take you to it." Through the trees in the park he led her with every show of courtesy till, coming into the open, he stopped before a pile of ruins : " There is your beautiful château, madame ! " he said. And as the miserable woman nervously burst into tears and wept with her children, he had the impertinence to add, " Why did you not remain, madame ? Nothing would have happened to you, except some little incident . . . that you would have found extremely pleasant. A woman who has once sampled German love-making finds all other men dull by comparison." And he dismissed her with a deep bow.

We see in a flash, in this one striking example, how the Germans interpret chivalry, mercy and a sense of decency !

IV.



CHAPTER X.

THE DEVASTATED TOWNS.

DURING the first month of the German occupation of Belgium a series of disgraceful crimes took place which comprise and form a synthesis of all the others: premeditated, cold-blooded devastation of whole towns, along with their most sacred edifices, their treasures of art, and their populations driven like flocks of sheep to slaughter or exile! Aërschot, Dinant, Andenne, Louvain, Termonde, Tamines are names that will live for ever in the people's memory as hate for their devastators will live in their hearts. Every day some fresh detail is brought to light revealing the anguish that those towns are enduring and adding a new glory to their martyrs' halo. Let us sadly do them homage from afar, while awaiting that glorious morning of deliverance when we shall go in pilgrimage to their

wonderful ruins, silent witnesses of the martyrdom they have endured !

The surroundings of Aërschot, retaken for some days by the army from Antwerp, have been methodically explored. It was a little town of eight thousand inhabitants on the banks of the Démer, surrounded by meadow-lands. A tall tower seemed to stand sentinel over its peace and quiet, broken only by the music of the waters of the mill beside the river. During the retreat of the Belgian Army to Antwerp, the valley which joins Aërschot to Diest was the scene of a series of violent engagements ; but there was not a single Belgian soldier in the town when the Germans entered it on the morning of August 19th. From the first they revealed their true character ; they fired on the houses, several of which were burned without any pretext, and, as a prologue to a drama even then in course of preparation, they drove some inhabitants out of their houses in the Rue du Marteau and shot them. The troops were then dispersed through the town, where they were billeted. No violence took place until late in the afternoon. The general and his aides-de-camp had gone to the house of the Burgomaster, M. Tielemans. At

four o'clock, seeing her husband distributing cigars at the door of the house to the sentries on duty, Madame Tielemans joined him and, as the general was watching from the balcony above, advised him to go in. The square in front of their house was filled with about two thousand German soldiers. Suddenly two columns of smoke rose, and there was a sudden volley of firing. The soldiers disbanded, fired in the windows of the houses, forced in the doors, and discharged their guns in the corridors. Terrified by the sight of this hell let loose, Mme. Tielemans dragged her husband, her children and the servants into a cellar. She did not know that upstairs at that very moment a bullet struck the general and killed him. The bullets were as thick as hail. Listen to the words of this wife and mother as she describes the scene : " After several moments of unspeakable anguish, one of the general's aides-de-camp came downstairs, saying : ' The general has been shot ! Where is the Burgomaster ? ' My husband said to me : ' This is serious for me ! ' As he turned to accompany the aide-de-camp, I said to the latter : ' You are in a position to state, Monsieur, that my husband has not fired a shot.' ' *That*

does not matter,' he replied. '*He is responsible.*' My husband was led away. My son, who was with me, took us to another cellar. The same aide-de-camp came presently and took my boy from me, kicking him along in front of him. The poor child could hardly walk (in the morning a German bullet, entering the room where he was sleeping, had ricocheted and wounded him in the calf of the leg). After my husband and my son had gone, I was taken all over the house by the Germans with a revolver held to my head. I was made look at the dead body of their general. Then my daughter and I were flung out of the house without coats or anything. They put us in the principal square, surrounded by a cordon of soldiers, and from there we were forced to watch the devastation of our beloved city. There it was that, by the sinister light of the burning town, about one o'clock in the morning, I saw for the last time my husband and my son bound together; followed by my brother-in-law, they were going to their martyrdom. . . . These wicked men have taken from me all that I loved. . . ."

The father and the son! The child was fifteen and a half and had done nothing; he was

taken, however, and to justify the collective crime which was being committed, he was accused of having killed the general. They finally invented this tale after having tried several others. To avenge it he and his father were slaughtered, and his uncle as well, while the whole population of the town was to endure three weeks of torture.

That began there and then. All the men were arrested ; fifty taken at random were led outside the walls : in groups of fours, they were made run on the road and were shot at. Ten escaped, but forty fell, and were finished off with bayonets. Later the other citizens were lined up against the embankments ; after having brought them all within range, every third man was methodically shot down. The Secretary of the Commission twenty days later still saw on the grass stubble every two yards clotted blood that marked where the victims had fallen.

Those who remained had to dig the trenches to bury their murdered brothers ; and with the rest of the inhabitants of the town, driven from their houses, they watched their beloved city burning. They saw a poor man, who had been in hiding in a house, spring into the midst of

the flames from an upper window holding his little boy in his arms, and they saw him dashed to death with the child on the pavement. Then they saw the first rush of the infuriated soldiery trying to break into the church. Five times they endeavoured to set fire to the doors, and five times they failed. At last they succeeded in forcing them. They broke the sacred altars and the confessionals, destroyed the organ and defaced the pillars, seized and burnt the Gothic wooden statues that ornamented the nave, and pillaged and profaned the sacred vessels. Then they shut in the edifice the terrified witnesses of their fury. They had henceforth free play. And for three weeks they burnt and pillaged, heaping up their booty in ammunition waggons, and indulging, amidst the ruins, in the most disgusting orgies. When a house was completely emptied they burnt it. Only those in which the officers were billeted were respected. M. Pierre Orts, the Secretary of the Commission, gives us some edifying details : " I have entered," he said, " several houses at random and gone all through them. Everywhere I found the furniture overthrown, broken up or soiled in a disgusting manner, the papers on the walls hanging in strips, the doors of the

cellars broken in, the wardrobes, the drawers all ransacked and emptied. Linen and all kinds of incongruous objects littered the floor, and everywhere there was an incredible number of empty bottles." In the house of Dr. Z., protected by an inscription recommending it to the goodwill of the invaders, and where officers were billeted, the following spectacle might be seen : " On the door-step one was met by a sickening smell of spilt wine, which drew our attention to the hundreds of empty or broken bottles that filled the hall, the staircase, and even the court. In the apartments reigned an indescribable disorder ; the floor was literally carpeted with torn garments, scraps of material, and mattresses ripped open. Everywhere broken furniture, and in all the rooms, beside the bed even, were empty bottles. The dining-room was encumbered with dozens of glasses, which covered the dining table and the smaller ones, surrounded with armchairs whose covers were half torn off, whilst in a corner a stained piano seemed to have been kicked nearly to pieces. Everything indicated that these places had been for many days the scene of drunken riots and loathsome orgies. . . . From what a quarter-

master of the gendarmerie, who was endeavouring with his men to reduce this chaos to some sort of order, said to me, the same thing could be seen in most of the houses where the German officers had chosen to take up their abode. . . .” Nothing remained of the town when the Belgians re-entered it on September 10th—for so short a time, alas!—except a few miserable women wandering amongst the ruins that were sodden with wine; by hundreds and thousands the inhabitants, taken out of the church into which they had been crowded, had been driven to their desolate, devastated lands or sent to Germany. . .

In another part of the country two little Walloon towns were both burned. Several days after an engagement with the French the Germans had entered unopposed the evacuated town of Dinant on August 21st, and there killed several persons, damaged some furniture, burned several houses, and then went away delighted with their excursion. On the 23rd they reappeared in great numbers, the 108th Regiment of Infantry at their head. It was half-past six in the morning. Passing the gates of the town near the church of the Premonstrants, where Mass was being said, they burst into it for no apparent

reason, brutally separated the women from the men and shot fifty of the latter, shutting the former up in the convent. Going on their way, they dispersed through the streets, knocking at the doors, shooting dead anyone who came to open them, collecting everyone they could find and leading them in front of the church for systematic massacre, locking up hundreds of women and children in the convents and in the prison. In the monastery of Leffe, where for several days they kept a great number of women, they indulged in the most odious excesses. On the first day they refused to feed their prisoners ; on the second they threw them some black bread ; and on the third they allowed some of them to go and pull up carrots in the monastery garden. Mad with terror, several of them fell at the feet of their oppressors and asked what would be the price of their liberty ! “ Thirty thousand francs ! ” they were told. The magnitude of the sum did not discourage them ; they had brought with them as much as they could of their poor savings, and they succeeded in getting together fifteen thousand francs. “ Would that not be enough ? ” The officer took the money, but did not set them free. On the contrary, they were

only made suffer the more. Every means was employed to torture these poor wretched women. They were told they were going to be shot, then that they were going to be burned alive, and, to increase their terror, bundles of straw were ignited beneath their windows. . . . At last, on the fourth day, the doors were opened and they were allowed to go out and gaze on their ruined city and their homes in ashes. One of them, Madame P., trembled with joy on seeing that her house had escaped; she went back to it with her six children, only to find in the hall the dead body of her husband killed four days ago, and she herself, helped by the little children, had to bury him at the bottom of the garden. He had spent the last week of his life in piously burying the Germans killed in the battle of the 15th August.

The rest of the women wander through all that is left of their town. Out of the fourteen hundred houses that made up Dinant and the suburbs, scarcely two hundred are still standing. Near the church, whose blackened cinders are covered with a bloodstained mud, one hundred and twenty men have been shot down with the mitrailleuse before their wives' eyes; at the

other end of the square eighty-four have been shot. To ensure their not missing them, they were placed at right angles against the wall; small bodies of German soldiers were then posted opposite at each side of the rectangle. Thus the poor wretches were shot at simultaneously from three sides. A little girl of three, whose parents have never been found, was picked up alive after lying for several hours under a heap of dead bodies. The thread-workers, after having remained a long time hidden in the cellars of their factory with their Director, M. Himmer, Consul of the Argentine, at last came out, bearing a white flag to ask for mercy. They were dragged away from their wives, who were with them, and seventy of them were immediately shot. The women were shut up in a courtyard at the foot of a rock; a mitrailleuse posted on the side of the mountain rained shot on them. The inhabitants of Neffe, taken by boat to the foot of the Bayart rock—the heroes expected to be decorated for this exploit—were sunk in their own blood. . . . M. Xavier Wasseige, Director of the National Bank, having refused to tell the secret of the safe for which he was responsible, was slain. He died praying. They had placed beside him his two

young sons, one of whom, named Jacques, fifteen years of age, not having been killed outright, sobbed for an hour begging them to finish him off, as no one dare bring him help. Madame Wasseige had to fly, terrified, with a child in her arms; her three other little ones, Elisabeth, Etienne and Simon, were taken by the German troops to Haversin. Dr. L., whose wife had given birth to a child only three days before, had to hide with her baby in the prison drain; all three of them lived there for forty-eight hours on a little water got from the Meuse in a felt hat. We hear the echo of more frightful dramas still. "Why are you behaving like this?" some women ask one of the officers. He does not know. . . . They look for their dead among the heaps lying there, and take away their remains. . . . The famous sack of Dinant by Charles the Bold in 1466, compared with this carnage, seems like some tournament of chivalry. Of the working population of Leffe, comprising a suburb which numbered two thousand inhabitants, a witness declares there remains sixteen men! On September 10th the dead bodies of one hundred and ninety, who had been shot, had been identified! The funereal list is increasing daily and

is now nearly eight hundred. Among those eight hundred victims who have been found, thirty-nine were under fifteen, and eighteen were over seventy. Thus was the prettiest town of the Meuse devastated by the Barbarians, who have not even the decency to blush at their own behaviour.

Andenne met with the same fate. On Thursday, August 20th, at six o'clock in the evening, after two days of relatively peaceful occupation, a volley of firing was suddenly heard in several directions, and a dozen houses between the Meuse and the station caught fire. The inhabitants, having taken refuge in their cellars, at first imagined that it was the Allies arriving in the town, but they soon saw that the firing was directed against themselves. Those who went to their front doors to see what was happening were instantly killed. The Burgomaster, M. Camus, who went upstairs from his cellar to shut his door, was wounded by a spent bullet ; his body was immediately riddled with twenty bayonets. Veritable volleys of firing were directed against the windows and the gratings of the cellars. What a night ! All that could be heard was the soldiers shouting in the streets,

breaking in the shop windows and carrying off all the goods that were left. Between twelve and one o'clock could be heard the booming of the guns. Towards four o'clock in the morning, a body of cavalry galloped along the high road, shouting: "People of Andenne! Come out, the French have come to your help!" Some miserable wretches, who allowed themselves to be deceived by this cry, were at once shot down. From five o'clock onwards the soldiers entered the houses and drove the inhabitants *en masse* towards the Place des Tilleuls. They had to go with their hands in the air, all of them, men, women, children, young or old, well or ill, between two rows of dead bodies thrown face downwards on the pavement. At the Place des Tilleuls Schoenmann was waiting for them. This German trooper was laughing with enjoyment at the scene. He summoned his officers, and there before the crowd of condemned citizens they held a consultation. They must be punished (!), but the task was not easy: there were so many of them. It was proposed to shoot them down in a body with the mitrailleuse, or to shoot them methodically in threes or fours. The experiment was even tried. Four men, one

holding an empty cartridge, the other furnished with a key, the third wounded in the finger, and the fourth, whose face twitched a little, were picked out by these marks and shot. Then a decision was arrived at. The prisoners were divided into several groups ; some were taken to the shores of the Meuse near the slaughter-house and executed in tens, in proper order. The others were shut up as hostages in some of the houses. They could hear, mixed with the noise of firing, the sobbing of women and the groans of the dying, the waltz music that some drunken officers were playing on the pianos in the pillaged drawing-rooms.

Schoenmann had two wounded civilians brought to the square ; they were thrown face downwards in the dust, writhing in their death agony. Having thus terrified the women, he called to them with an affectation of mercy : " Go home, ladies, and bury your dead ! " In their homes worse outrages awaited them. Several, on their way thither, witnessed unspeakable sights. Long will they remember this big, red-faced soldier who mutilated his victims, old women and children, with his axe before killing them : a striking and typical example of Germanic

savagery ! After forty-eight hours the massacre was stopped and the orgie abated a little ; but no mercy was shown even to those men who were finally going to be set free. In this pleasant, smiling town, where three hundred and twenty citizens had perished, most of them by the bayonet, where three hundred houses had been burned, there reigned the most utter devastation, and there should have reigned the silence of mourning ; but to crown their cruelty, the oppressors inflicted on the survivors a banquet that they christened the "*Pardon of Andenne !*" The officers and soldiers got it up and held it in the principal square, forcing the local authorities who remained to take part in it, and, amidst the ruins where the widows and orphans of their victims were crouching in fear and trembling, they mingled with hymns of peace and cries of "*Hoch*" for their Emperor their loathsome and insulting fête. In our wildest dreams we can picture no more tragic scene. It was not enough to have mutilated their victims' bodies, but they must also mutilate their souls !

At Tamines, a manufacturing district, the Germans revenged themselves on the poor inhabitants, who were quietly leading their work-a-day

life, for the losses that a French regiment had just inflicted on them. During the whole of August 22nd, everyone who appeared in the streets, men, women and children, were taken to the parish church of Alloux. At six o'clock the usual grim separation of the women from the men took place, and the latter were taken in a body to the principal square near the bridge of the Sambre. . . . There were more than five hundred; the youngest was thirteen and the oldest eighty-five. They were, for the most part, task workers with horny hands, fathers and bread-winners. What did that matter? Was it not a good opportunity to cut down the tree in full sap and to strike this industrial district in the midst of its strength and vigour? At seven o'clock in the evening an officer read aloud something that they did not understand. But they understood, alas! too well its significance. Immediately the firing began. When it was over, this whole human mass was mown down. An officer shouted that their safety was promised to those who had fallen down feigning death, or who were only wounded, on condition that they rose. Hardly had they staggered to their feet, stained with the blood of their dead

and dying brothers, than a second volley of firing greeted them. Then, in case any of them were still alive, an officer turned the mitrailleuse on them, and finally the soldiers rushed forward, threw themselves on this mass of writhing flesh lying in a lake of blood, and stabbed the dead and dying with their bayonets, crushing them under foot or with the butts of their rifles !

There was even more suffering in store for this wretched town. The next day, August 23rd, another group, composed of about two hundred men, were brought to the square to bury the dead. They turned away with horror from "a heap at least forty yards long, six yards wide and a yard high of dead bodies." They dug immense graves and buried the still bleeding remains : "Fathers were burying the bodies of their sons, and sons the bodies of their fathers." The women were brought to look on this tragic sight. Near by the soldiers and officers were drinking champagne. A wounded man, whom they had just flung into the grave, raised his arm : they called the major. "Bury him," he said—and at this command, impatiently reiterated, they buried him. This task finished, the grave-diggers' lives were spared, but they were driven with the whole

population towards the village of Velaine, and scattered in the surrounding country. Then, as everywhere else, systematic pillage finished the day. The merchants' safes, which elsewhere have often baffled the thieves, were opened this time by the aid of burglars' jimmies and oxy-hydrogen tubes. One hundred and eighty-eight houses were burned; five hundred and thirty-four, after the departure of the horde, were left empty, defaced and in ruins. . . .

The sack of Louvain, like that of Andenne, did not begin on the arrival of the Germans. The enemy had entered the town on August 19th and had found the population quiet and resigned. The pillage of private banks, the devastation of some houses, the brutal capture of a large number of hostages, extortionate requisition, the liberation of civil prisoners of German nationality, and numerous outrages on women, were only the preliminary incidents. The lives of the inhabitants and the town itself seemed safe, and gradually the townspeople were beginning sadly to grow accustomed to the sight of the enemy in their streets. "I have often seen," says Professor X. in his account, "I have often seen, in the square of the Vieux-Marché, a number

of inhabitants mingled with the soldiers, to whom they were selling dainties, cakes, groceries and beer." On the evening of the 25th, aggravated by a repulse that had just been inflicted on them by the French troops, and excited, it is said, by a mistake which in the darkness had led the companies stationed in the town to fire on those returning to it in disorder, mistaking them for an attacking force—this double excitement coincided, as we will see, with a deliberate command. The German soldiers dispersed through the town began to fire in every direction in the deserted streets. Then they set fire to the town. The ancient building of the Halles, now part of the university, was among the first to suffer. It contained the Library, celebrated throughout the whole world. That was what the representatives of this highly cultured nation first destroyed. Near by, the beautiful church of Saint Peter, containing many valuable pictures and treasures of art, caught fire next, and some of the most beautiful houses in the town were soon blazing. "The soldiers broke in the doors of the houses and set fire to them by means of fuses. They fired on any inhabitants who attempted to come out. Many persons, who had taken refuge in

their cellars, were burned alive ; others were shot as they were trying to escape from this furnace.*

Many of the citizens managed to fly from their dwellings ; through their gardens and down the side streets they were taken to the square in front of the station, where already the dead bodies of ten civilians were lying on the grass. They brutally separated the husbands from their wives and children, searched them and took their money and jewels, and then drove them along the roads, without giving them even time for one last word, one farewell kiss. A body of seventy-five citizens, followed by the clergy, among whom were observed two Spanish monks and an American priest, were led in front of the German troops as far as Campenhout, where, at nightfall, they were shut up in the church. At four o'clock in the morning the door was opened, and an officer called to the captives that it was time for them to confess as they would be shot in half an hour. Half an hour later they were released. Thinking themselves now safe, they were returning to Louvain when a regiment stopped them, and made them go back to

* See Fifth Report of the Commission of Inquest.

Malines. At its gates they were released. But to get any idea of the sufferings endured on this terrible journey, the detailed accounts given by some old men should be read in their entirety in the Reports of the Commission. I have before my eyes the statement made by a notable citizen of the town of a journey of the same description made by some of the other inhabitants, and which did not end, as that did, by their release. Stationed since the morning on the Boulevard of Diest, at three o'clock they were made start in the direction of the Mont-César Monastery, and so on towards the suburb of Hérent. They passed between two rows of blazing houses. The charred fragments of dead bodies lay on the pavements. Furniture was burning, harvests were in flames. Automobiles passed at full speed carrying officers and the miserable hostages who were bound on the bonnets or the footboards. They dashed past, emerging for a moment from the darkness to vanish again in the gloom and smoke. At the station of Hérent the body of prisoners had to make a half-turn, and were taken back to near Mont-César, where they had to kneel. The officers aimed at them and then burst out laughing; not this time. Back to

Hérent. At nightfall they reached Buecken, a little village which looks like a funeral pile of dead. At nine o'clock they were taken back once more the way they had come and spent the night in potato fields with the habitual threat: "Should one of you attempt to escape, all will be shot!"

"It began to pour with rain, we were in ordinary clothes, and we spent the whole night lying in the mud. We dare not even sit up. Towards half-past ten a soldier gave us all that remained of his bread. There were four of us, M. G. and M. H., my son and myself, crouching together, trying to keep warm; then the soldier gave us each a mouthful of his wine, asking us not to tell because what he was doing was forbidden. There were others who suffered more than we. There was a poor baker from Louvain, in our group, who had been arrested when he was baking. He was clad only in a pair of cotton trousers and a shirt, and shod with light tennis shoes. He was in a lamentable condition."

Then, at four in the morning, they started off again, following the most extraordinary itinerary. Leaving one field of mud only to enter another. Blows were rained on them. At eight o'clock

they reached Thildonck, where the women and children, driven out of their houses, were attached to this dismal procession through the town. During the whole morning they went from one village to another, without food or rest, bruising their feet on the sharp pieces of burned timber, walking over putrefying dead bodies. At mid-day the prisoners were taken into the church of Rotselaer, filled with a silent, trembling crowd, where they witnessed the sublime spectacle of an old priest condemned to death with his flock standing before the altar, clothed already in the majesty of death, giving his blessing to all those present who, perhaps, were also about to die.

Accompanied by hundreds of peasants, to whom hundreds of men and women were added as they went, still fasting, the wretched people returned to Louvain. They reached it about seven o'clock in the evening, and were stationed in the big square between the blazing monuments, so tired and wearied that some of the old people, like the curé of Rotselaer, flung themselves full length on the pavement; then they were made go back to the station.

And they hoped that their Calvary was nearly at an end; alas! it was only beginning. In horse

trucks, with only some dirty straw and full of indescribable filth, these pilgrims of death found other citizens of Louvain who were waiting for their arrival to start for the unknown. The next morning the train started. They passed Liège, Aix-la-Chapelle, Düren, and arrived at Cologne. Hardly there than they return to Düren. From Düren back again to Cologne. Where were they going? Were they being taken to some prisoners' camp? They did not know. Why were they being driven here and there like this? They did not know that either. On the return, one of them found the right word—a word we use in talking of wild beasts, not of men; they were taken there to be *exhibited* to the public gaze. At every station where they stopped the populace shook their fists at them and shouted insults through the barriers. Sometimes a woman in the train would rise and hold up her infant before the eyes of the crowd. And in a moment a shamed silence would fall on them. In the waggons could be heard the cries of little infants in arms. "At Aix," said one of the travellers, "nearly dead with hunger and thirst, I asked a Red Cross lady, who was passing with coffee, to give me a drink. 'Nothing for you!' she

replied severely; 'the journey is all you are getting!' " When they were taken out of the train at Cologne, the same thing happened. "The Germans, who were watching us get out of the train," says another witness, "asked who we were, and our gaolers replied: 'These are the prisoners from Louvain.' And it seemed," he added, "that they knew all about us, for they flung stones and shook their fists at us. I still wonder what they imagined we had done to them." They had to tramp through the streets, patient beneath the insults of the crowd. At night they were put in the premises of a Dog Show or in a deserted *Luna Park*, where those who were able to, slept. Oh! irony—on the steps of a *Joywheel*! They were given a little bread and water. In the morning they were taken back to the station, put in the train again, this time for Brussels, where they arrived on August 30th, and where, in spite of the opposition of their gaolers, the police managed to give them food: they had eaten nothing since the morning of the 26th, except a few ounces of bread. Then they were sent in front of the troops as far as the Belgian outposts, and many of them spent that night on the banks of the canal, beside Malines,

the bridge being up, calling for help through the darkness ; the sentries not knowing from whence came these cries in the night. . . . Of those who set out some never returned. Several, without a word, dropped on the railway lines before the trains ; others went mad.

During these terrible days of the martyrdom of Louvain that was being extended in every direction by those miserable processions, had they not determined to crucify this glorious daughter of the Church ? There was one last group of martyrs. They were nearly all of them priests. Among them were Mgr. Ladeuze, rector of the university ; Mgr. de Becker, rector of the American College ; Mgr. Willemson, former rector of the same institute, and some young Jesuits from the important college of Louvain. They were led along the Brussels road. Several died on the way, among them Father Eugene Dupierreux, scholastic of the Society of Jesus ; his crime was to have had in his possession a notebook containing some notes on the war. Another, Professor Cauchie, nearly perished. His friend, M. Grondys, a professor at Dordrecht, who had stayed with him in the hope of protecting him, strong himself in his Dutch nationality, did not

ask, but exacted his freedom: "Do you know that you are dealing with a great scholar?" A rough officer haughtily replied: "At Aërschot they killed the greatest *stratège* of Germany!" This vulgar beer-drinker, in his encounter with science, makes use of this cheap pedantic expression.

Let us come back to the heart of the furnace. When the male population of the town were thus sent to meet their various fates, the women left in Louvain, holding their little children by the hand, were taking their share in the suffering. They were at first guarded in front of the station. During the whole of August 26th they had nothing to eat. To make up for that, they were shown a horrible spectacle. They were forced to be present at the execution of twenty of their fellow-citizens, among whom were several monks, who, bound in fours, were shot at the other end of the square. . . . A pretence execution of Mgr. Coenraets, vice-rector of the university, and of Father Schmid, Dominican, was gone through before them; a volley was fired, and the witnesses, convinced as they were of the reality of the drama, were forced to applaud."*

* See Fifth Report of the Commission of Inquest.

Released during the night, such of those poor women as found their houses intact returned to them, but not to be left in peace for long. At eight o'clock in the morning they were ordered to leave the town which, they were told, was going to be bombarded. Then came the exodus *en masse*, by every road, through blazing villages : now it is not a few hundred men, but an immense body of people, driven forward with blows, who, as they pass officers and soldiers, must raise their arms and kneel down, who by day live on vegetables pulled up from the fields, and by night sleep on the roadside ! Many fall exhausted and die ; women commit suicide ; men who cannot walk quickly enough are beaten ; cases of sudden madness occur among them. On the road from Tirlemont alone there are ten thousand and more flying from the burning town behind them from which the smoke is rising. " I saw," said the witness F., " a poor woman giving birth to a child on the roadside ; an old nun, who could not walk, was being wheeled in a barrow." At the gates of Tirlemont they are driven back towards Hougaerde ; at Hougaerde back again to Tirlemont. Will they ever find shelter to sleep in ? No ! Those who have not relatives in the town

are still driven from one village to another as far as Limbourg.

In the almost deserted town pillage will now be easy. All that remains will be taken. Beside the old university which is burning, beside works of art that have been destroyed, officers are gaily drinking champagne amid the ruins; this medley of fire and wine intoxicates the soldiers, giving free rein to pillage as they will. The whole centre of the city is a furnace in which houses are falling to pieces. Not a living soul is to be seen except the incendiaries and the thieves. But a great cry of distress rises from the very heart of this devastation: the day before about two thousand peasants from the neighbourhood, left homeless by the destruction of their villages, had been put in the Artillery Riding School; they had come to Louvain hoping to find shelter there. They are so numerous that there is no room for them to lie down. Most of them are seated or crouching in the darkness. The only light they have is the reflection of the flames that are licking even their prison door. Among them a little child dies, women moan, whilst their gaolers jest together, and the noise of falling masonry is mingled with the lively music of a

military concert in the Alhambra Theatre ! Nothing could be more terrible than this black hole in the midst of such an inferno ! When, on August 29th, the regiment of Landsturm from Halle entered the town, the orgie, which was to last five days longer, was at its height. A man of this regiment, whose diary forms part of the archives of the Commission, says in entering Louvain " there was such a scene of devastation that words cannot picture the awfulness of it. Burning and ruined houses lined the streets ; a few were still standing. . . the roads were simply strewn with broken glass ; morsels of burning wood, the cables of the tramway lines and telephone wires were trailing on the ground and blocking the way. The regiment had to advance in close formation, in order to break open the first houses and steal (pardon, I mean requisition) wine and other commodities. It was like a disbanded rising, and each one did as he liked ; the officers went first to set the example ! " . . . And so continued and finally ended that drunken and debauched rioting, the destruction of this old university city, fourteen hundred and ninety-four houses of which were burned !

And so ended those memorable days of the triumph of German culture over Science and Beauty !

The crime of Louvain is not only a crime against human life ; it is a crime against human intelligence. It exceeds in its double horror all their other crimes. The nation who permitted such a thing is for ever dishonoured, the leader who carried out the instructions—he is called Mannteuffel—should be put in the pillory of History. He is as bad as Schoenmann, the assassin of Andenne ; as Bayer, the cold-blooded oppressor of Dinant ; and as Sommerfeld, who, seated on a chair in the middle of the Grand Place of Termonde, answered the kneeling burgomaster, who begged him to spare what remained of the town : “ *Nein ! Razieren !* ” and ordered the “ *Pionniers* ” to begin. Need I describe Termonde. Do these words of Sommerfeld not suffice if I add that his command was obeyed to the letter ?

And yet I must describe this last abomination. In spite of nerves worn out with the study of those horrors, a holy form floats before my eyes and gives me courage to go on to the bitter end. The old hagiographers, in describing the awful

tortures of the first Christians, did not weep, for they saw the light of heaven pouring down on those wounds and sores and transfiguring them. Only the vision of an eternal Belgium, of which these horrors are the holocaust and the ransom, enables me to continue this tale of the martyred towns.

We have seen again and again the Germans torturing and insulting the wounded. We now see them insulting and defacing a corpse. They have never respected Life. We now see them insulting Death.

Termonde was a sleepy little town, situated amidst quiet meadows with the blue waters of the Dendre and the Escaut winding around it. A *béguinage*, pervaded with silence and filled with the perfume of lilies, stood in the heart of the town like a dream within a dream. An antique and charming town hall, raised above the square its curious tower. One could not help feeling a certain awe and respect for the past in wandering through the gabled streets. The daily increasing industrial activity of the town seemed to be laying siege to its walls, and outside, two populous districts, Saint-Gilles and Lebbecke, were filled with prosperous industries. The

combined population of the three towns amounted to twenty-six thousand.

Immediately after the occupation of Brussels the enemy endeavoured to reach Termonde. At the beginning of September they arrived in great numbers and bombarded the town, which, being only defended by a small detachment of Belgians, was quickly taken. The Germans entered during the day, went at once to the hospital, led some hostages there, pillaged some houses, sacked the *Bank of the Dendre*, whilst their general, von Boehm, had himself proudly photographed on the steps of the town hall. The soldiers, however, did not seem as if they were going to stay long there, and the inhabitants gained confidence. A warning, uttered by an officer to one of them, aroused their fears: "You had better go away," he said. "Termonde is going to be destroyed." "When?" "In ten minutes!" Sure enough, ten minutes later the 9th Regiment of "*Pionniers*" appeared at the gates. To begin with, these heroes burned the building works, and set fire to some groups of houses. Did they need helpers? Their first care was to release one hundred and forty-five thieves who were imprisoned in the civil prison. On September

5th, as arranged, the systematic burning began. Sommerfeld directed affairs, helped by his worthy acolyte, Major von Forstner—a name destined to be of shameful memory. The hospital was sprayed with petrol and burned: a poor epileptic remained in the flames. The church of the Béguinage followed. House by house, for two days, the rich quarters of the town were destroyed. Whole streets disappeared. On September 7th the burning ceased. The "*Pionniers*," it was explained, had to go and cut the railway communications. They left Termonde a smoking ruin. The suburbs had been sacked, as well as the town itself. Saint-Gilles was full of dead bodies. Twenty-five men at Lebbeke had been massacred, four hundred and fifty had been sent to Germany. The neighbouring village of Appels had been bombarded for no reason.

Some inhabitants, in spite of everything, would not leave the town. Their nightmare was nearly over. On the 10th, all that remained of Termonde was reoccupied by the Belgians. Going through Saint-Gilles our soldiers saw a civilian crucified on his door, his right hand bound to the bell and his left to the handle, his body pierced in five places. The sight of this crucifixion

haunted them. They swore to themselves to put an end for ever to such cruelties. Alas ! inferior in numbers they were forced to retreat on September 16th and 17th, when the second bombardment of the town occurred.

The Germans began where they had left off. The tower of the town hall was still standing with its quaint old-fashioned form: they set fire to the town hall. A few houses and some of the streets were still intact: these they burned, whilst around them soldiers, obeying orders, went on with the work of destruction, whilst the robbers of this dead body hurried throughout the whole town, and officers feasted in the big square. A few carpets had been discovered, and they brought sofas, arm-chairs, cushions, a piano, and illuminated by the flames of the burning town their music, drunken rioting and laughter lasted till morning.

Termonde was empty. Termonde no longer existed. Here and there a gable or a monument was left standing to show that here had once flourished a city. An awful silence reigned over the deserted ruins. During the siege of Antwerp, in the beginning of October, for some inexplicable reason, the incendiaries again bom-

barded the city. And then for several days those grey figures could be seen still defacing this poor mutilated town that Death would have made sacred in the eyes of any other nation !

CHAPTER XI.

TWO CRIMES COMMITTED ON BEAUTY.

WE have seen their contempt for Life, Intellect and even Death ! Now we come to their contempt for Beauty. Their crimes committed on Beauty include all the others, because the victims possessed the fullness of Life, the pride of Intellect, and all the charm of Death !

Malines was the sister city of Bruges. She had the same peaceful canals that reflected the old gables, the same melancholy squares with fine old architecture, and beautiful pictures whose rich colour and Rubens draperies gleamed through the blue smoke of the incense in the naves of her churches. And like her illustrious Flemish sister she possessed that sanctified silence that came at nightfall, disturbed to-day by the bugle calls and coarse shouting of the Barbarians.

Like Bruges, she had tall towers, of which one, rising in the middle of the Brabanconne plain,

seemed one of the most beautiful features of the country. It could be seen from the distance, even from the hills round Brussels, rising up into the heavens—a prayer in stone. Like Bruges, she had those narrow garden-bordered streets, old sleepy houses, her simple, tranquil archbishop's palace, and her big square, an island of peace far from the busy life of the suburbs. On summer evenings at dusk, when the lilies from the gardens filled the air with their pure perfume, the cathedral with its tower was like some wonderful dream. Suddenly from the belfry music would break forth; a magic carillon, filling the air with drops of silver rain. Windows would open, and passers-by would hasten to the "Ruelle-sans-fin," a dark cul-de-sac at the foot of the church, where the sounds could be heard best. For hours, silent shadows could be distinguished hovering round, drinking in this music with the perfumes of the night.

The frail bells that rang out the carillon were silenced by shells. One day, without any warning, this open, defenceless town was bombarded by the German cannons posted near her. When they ceased for a time, the inhabitants thought they were saved; but they only began again.

The shells were falling in hundreds, aimed obviously at Saint-Rombaut. In the neighbourhood of the church civilians were killed in hundreds, and the houses surrounding fell in, but for once their object was not to destroy houses. At last the cathedral was struck; their object was achieved.

The sides of the tower shivered to atoms. Great holes appeared in the walls, the broken windows fell in on the flag-stones of the cathedral like shattered rainbows. Everything near the building suffered with it, and still the shells rained; the town was emptied, the mass of inhabitants, bearing their sick and wounded, set out along the roads to exile. Malines was a dead city that the cannons still bombarded. Finally they ceased, and the soldiers entered streets that for days had been deserted, and began to pillage shamelessly. They were quite satisfied because they imagined it was possible to vanquish a cathedral!

I have not seen Malines since, neither have I seen the yawning holes in her beautiful church, nor her great patriot-archbishop, full of pride amidst the ruins, his heart bleeding beneath his purple robes. I have not walked along the

ruined streets beneath her shattered tower. But I have seen the other victim, Ypres, which shared the glory and the suffering of Malines, for, like her, Ypres was bombarded that its beauty might be destroyed.

Which had this glory? I should say which *has* this glory, for the bombardment is not yet over. For weeks and weeks it has been going on. Here again the main part of the town is little damaged. All that has been destroyed are the houses surrounding its famous buildings.

In this city, so powerful in the past, that to-day has nobly suffered martyrdom, all the splendour and beauty of the past were contained in two edifices. And those, with their extensions, their annexes, their passages, and their courts, formed a group that was unique in the whole world. Artists made great pilgrimages to them, always overcome with a silent admiration as they gazed at this wonderful "Grand place," an enormous oblong—when they saw that immense façade of the Halles, overwhelming in its majesty. The Cathedral of Rheims was the most beautiful religious monument of Europe: the Germans knew that when they destroyed it; the Halles of Ypres was the most beautiful civil monument.

It can only be compared to the Palace of the Doges ; free and owning allegiance not even to kings. The walk, covered with statues, told from its fabulous beginning the history of Flanders ; beneath the great central tower, flanked by four belfries, was a dark archway, through which one entered the halls on the ground floor, whose stone ceiling was supported by arches. The people from the country around met there for the busy weekly markets. One went through wonderful wainscot rooms where the stained glass windows threw a mellow light on the interior ; on the first storey, in that amazing hall, two hundred yards long, extending along the whole front of the building, the visitor seemed to be gazing into a vessel of light. The light entered from both sides, framing in sunlight the richly coloured canvasses depicting Ypres in former times, and melting into the gloom of the intricate beams that supported the roof. In Les Halles could be found the truest and most wonderful expression of the glory of the Flemish past.

Quite near—one had simply to cross the colonnade—stood the church of Saint-Martin, a marvel of Gothic architecture, in whose naves

were mysterious chapels containing priceless pictures. The tombs of bishops, around the choir, displayed their marble pomp. In the centre a little copper cross on one of the flags—nameless and with no inscription—marked the place where sleeps Jansenius, the cursed bishop. On the left a door opened on an exquisite cloister, among whose delicate arches twisted a great old tree. All these things, the Cathedral opening off Les Halles, the towers side by side, the arched passages, this unexpected dream garden, some old houses, like the Musée or the Boucherie, grouped around, composed a feast of granite and light, a perpetual miracle, always renewed according to the point from which one viewed it, the time of day, the season, and the light and shade.

They decided that all this was to be destroyed. Driven out of Ypres, they were going to avenge themselves. How could they do so better than by breaking these defenceless stones? One evening shells shattered the town hall—a gem of architecture—with the great Halles, which was also reduced to cinders. The vast roof blazed, pierced in twenty places by the shells ; the tower had fallen in and the flames were spreading to

the buildings near. And when the fire at last died down, they bombarded again.

I have seen it. . . . And the town is like a crown, scarcely damaged, encircling this awful gap. Of the Musée nothing remains but the shell of the façade; the neighbouring houses are in ruins; the Halles is only a skeleton.

I went within its ruined walls, some parts of which are still standing; the pillars on the ground floor still raise their useless arches to the air of heaven, for there is nothing but the open sky overhead. An immense heap of débris fills the whole building; statues, the capitals of the columns, whole turrets, charred wood, shells of walls, mullioned windows in atoms, fragments of arches, formed the sinister heaps from which the smoke was still rising. Through the gaps in the walls could be seen Saint-Martin, the other great ruin, as through a sieve.

I saw the nave of Saint-Martin filled with broken beams, all its beautiful roof fallen in.

I opened the door of the cloister. In spite of all its many wounds, beneath the bombardment that still continued, it looked luminous and calm. Broken sculpture covered the ground and lay at the foot of the columns. A Lion of

Flanders had its whole face taken off ; all that remained beneath his mane were two dark holes in the stone in place of eyes : never had he better shown his proud anger ! The figure of a Virgin had the body almost completely destroyed, the breast defaced, the legs broken and the arms shattered. Only the two hands and the face were intact. The hands raised to heaven were clasped in prayer and the face wore a smile of ecstasy. And I realised that though the Barbarians might destroy my country, mutilating her beautiful buildings and massacring her children, they could never harm her soul. . . .

CHAPTER XII.

THE CALVARY OF A VILLAGE.

SUCH crimes as those I have just related echo through the whole world. But the suffering of many an insignificant little village will never be known. The murder of some great personage quickly attracts public attention though it may reveal less cruelty on the part of the assassin than the obscure murder of some young peasant on the roadside.

I could mention innumerable villages which, like those towns of which I have spoken, have suffered martyrdom. To give an example let me tell the story of one, for it is typical of all. I came across this calm, unexaggerated account made by an eye-witness, and its graphic sentences brought tears to my eyes. It told of the anguish that the humble village of Surice, in the district of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse

has gone through. The tale is simply told and I merely quote what I read, changing nothing :—

“Surice was a little village of rather more than six hundred inhabitants, in the valley of Florennes. Off the main roads, only side roads led to it, one going from Rosée to Mariembourg, by Romedenne, Romerie and Matagne, the other coming from Franchimont and leading to Soulme and Gochenée. The population, mostly agricultural, were simple peace-loving people, and the clean little village had an air of comfort and well-being.

“Since the month of June I had been in the village of Surice with my sister, Madame de Gaiffier. Our niece, Marie-Louise, aged fifteen, the daughter of our brother Ernest, was with us. Adjoining our house was a fairly large farmhouse, occupied by this girl’s father, his wife, and another daughter, Marguerite, aged seventeen.

“About August 14th a detachment of French troops took up their position at Surice. During Sunday, the 23rd, regular processions of villagers came from near Dinant, principally from Onhaye and thereabout. In the evening, we saw by the light on the horizon, that the villages were

burning. On the same evening Dr. Jacques, of Anthée, with his wife and five children, took refuge with us. They were accompanied by several persons, among whom were M. Piret, the curé of Anthée, the curé of Onhaye, M. Palande's servant from Miavote, and others. Dr. Jacques reassured us a little, for he thought that Surice, being off the main road, would escape. But our fears redoubled later when two automobiles arrived, one containing our cook's husband, chauffeur to the Count of Beaufort, at Loyers, who came for his wife; the other taking a captain of the engineers and another officer, accompanied by his wife and his sons, training for the army. They gave us a frightful description of what was happening at Namur, and then left for Chimay.

"On Monday morning many of our refugees also decided to leave and departed towards Romedenne. On the other hand, a professor from the college of Bellevue at Dinant, the Abbé Gaspiard, arrived. He told us that he had nearly been shot; he had been arrested with the director of the college, the Abbé Nicolas, and other professors. The Germans had ranged the mitrail-leuse opposite them, but they had succeeded in

escaping into the woods, and he came, with two of his friends, M. Capelle, curé of Ostemrée, and M. Debatty, curé of Morville. The last two did not stay long and decided to go on and find safer quarters.

“My sister went in the afternoon to visit some French wounded, who were in the ambulance of the Fathers of the Holy Family at the top of the village. She met some French officers, who expressed the opinion that, for one night at least, we could rest in peace; they went towards Romedenne, where they were to guard the road from Soulme.

“When she came back through the village, about six o'clock, she heard firing. It was the French mitrailleuse posted on a height between Surice and Romedenne in the place named ‘aux Fosses.’ They were firing in the direction of the cemetery, on the Germans coming from Soulme. From our own house, too, we could hear the firing. Our refugees even left the garden to go and hide in a barn, where they hoped to find shelter. That lasted a full hour. Then the French retired; having, they believed, killed a great number of Germans. About seven o'clock we closed the shutters, and everyone in our house

took refuge in the cellars. Towards nine o'clock the mitrailleuse and the cannons began firing on the village. The Germans came and stationed their mitrailleuse in the courtyard of a neighbouring farm. My brother fled.

"About eleven o'clock we smelt burning, and Dr. Jacques went upstairs with my sister, to see, to their great astonishment, the whole village ablaze, our own farm included. The burning buildings were already falling in. They came and told us that everything was on fire and that we had better go out.

"We went out on to the door-step. All around the houses were blazing: those of the Cogniaux, the Tonnes, Mathieu Chabot and others. Later we learned that the inhabitants of these houses had also taken refuge in their cellars, but had been driven out by the Germans and had fled through the village. More dead than alive, we went back to the ground floor to await events. We slept little or not at all, and, terrified, we spent most of the night in prayer.

"On Tuesday, August 25th, at about six in the morning, we heard the sound of horses' hoofs. Officers, revolver in hand, were searching the shrubbery at the bottom of our garden to find any

people who might have taken refuge there. Some infantrymen arrived. They cried 'Open !' And the next moment, before we had time to think, the doors were burst open—the soldiers breaking them in with the butts of their rifles—and the firing ceased. The soldiers were all dressed in grey uniform, their helmets covered with a cloth the same colour ; I did not notice what number they bore ; I was too frightened to think of it.

“ At the point of the bayonet we were forced to go out. I tried to take a little handbag with me, but a soldier struck me on the arm and would not allow it. My sister, too, was roughly hustled, and her dress ripped with bayonets, but she was not wounded. When the three priests, the curé of Anthée, the curé of Onhayé, and Abbé Gaspiard, were going out, the soldiers ground their teeth, shook their fists at them and stuck the points of their bayonets against their hearts. At the same time a German threatened me with his revolver. During this scene, others in the garden were setting fire to the outhouses. We were ranged in a row and we thought that our last hour had come. Then they led us over the house, breaking the windows as they passed

with the butts of their rifles. We were next driven down the road towards the church, our number increasing as we went. Families, roughly handled by the soldiers, were being driven out of the houses that were still intact. Then it was that we saw our curé, M. Poskin, come up with his old mother of eighty years, his sister, Mdlle. Thérèse, and another sister, Marie, with her husband, M. Schmidt, Inspector of Schools at Gerpennes, and their four sons. They had come the day before to take refuge at Surice. The soldiers continued their atrocious behaviour ; they were firing on the most inoffensive of the people. I heard that the old village bard, Charles Colot, aged eighty-eight years, who was standing at his door, was shot ; the soldiers rolled him in a cover and set fire to it. I saw a German soldier force Elie-Pierrot's stable door as he was rescuing his old mother-in-law of over eighty years from the burning building. Others took the poor old woman from him and blew out his brains ; he fell across the door of his dwelling.

“ We had passed the house of Henri Burniaux. It was on fire, as well as the tobacco factory, the offices and the buildings on the other side of

the street. When we came to Leopold Burniaux', the postman's house, we heard heartrending cries ; his wife, Eleonore, was begging for mercy for her sons. Her husband had just been shot before her eyes ; her son Arnould, made priest a year ago, and who was spending his holidays with her, had also been seized by the soldiers and killed mercilessly ! Then they killed her other son, Albert, who had broken his leg in an accident the day before and could not escape. There only remained the last son of this wretched woman, Gaston, a professor in the College of Malonne ; they had to join our group, clinging despairingly to each other, and our Calvary continued. As they passed, they cast heart-broken looks at the smoking débris of their house where this awful drama had just been enacted. A little further off I saw in a garden the dead body of a woman, whose name I do not know ; two little children were weeping beside the corpse.

“ They led us along the Romedenne road. The houses on both sides of it were already burned, notably those of the Town Clerk, M. Pichon ; the Receiver of Taxes, M. Georges, M. Stanislas Burniaux, the Burgomaster Del-

vourt, and all the working-class district adjoining! The buildings of the school and of the town hall had so far escaped, also the church.

“And so we came to ‘aux Fosses.’ We saw lying in the ditches on the roadside as we passed the dead bodies of French soldiers and horses. On the right and left were many German soldiers with mitrailleuses; they would shake their fists at us and threaten us with their revolvers. Soon they made us leave the road and took us to the left, across some fallow ground, from which we saw Romedenne in the distance. We numbered about fifty or sixty persons, men and women. It was about a quarter past seven in the morning. Then they separated the women from the men. An officer came and said to us in French, with a strong German accent: ‘You all deserve to be shot. A girl of fifteen fired on one of our officers, but the council of war has decided that only the men will be shot; the women will be kept prisoners!’ What happened then is too awful to describe. Eighteen men were standing there. Besides the curé of Anthée and the curé of Onhaye and the Abbé Gaspiard, there was our own curé and his brother-

in-law, Dr. Jacques, and his son Henri, a boy of less than sixteen ; further off, Gaston Burniaux, Leonard Soumoy, his son-in-law Durdu, and Camille Soumoy ; and further away, Balbeur and Billy, accompanied by his son of seventeen ; then there was a man from Onhaye and another from Dinant who had come to seek refuge at Surice. Then two others, whose names I do not know. They nearly put beside them M. Schmidt's little boy, a child less than fourteen. The soldiers hesitated an instant, then pushed him roughly away. Just then I saw a young German soldier—and I tell this in all sincerity—who was so overcome that big tears were falling on his tunic and, without attempting to dry his eyes, he turned aside that the officer might not see him.

“Some minutes passed, then, before our terrified eyes and amidst the sobs of the women, who were crying ‘ Kill me too ! Kill me too ! ’ in spite of the little children’s tears, they ranged the men on the side of the deep road that leads from the high road to the bottom of the village. From there they sent us mute signs of farewell, a wave of the hand, or merely a look. Little Henri Jacques was clinging to one of the priests

as if for comfort and support, and crying, 'I am too young ! I do not want to die !' Unable to look longer on this awful spectacle, I turned aside and covered my face with my hands. The soldiers fired a volley and all the men fell. Some one said to me, 'Look, they have fallen !' Some were not killed outright and we could see their limbs moving. The soldiers finished them off by striking them on the head with the butts of their rifles, among them the curé of Surice, whose head, they told me later, was horribly swollen. No sooner was the massacre over than the Germans despoiled the bodies ; they took their watches and rings, purses and pocket books. Schmidt had on him, his wife told me, the sum of three thousand francs. . . .

" In the meantime some German soldiers led forward a man, named Victor Cavillot, and, before he had even reached the spot where the others had just been shot, they fired on him. I saw him throw up his arms, and his body fell into the deep ditch.

" We were filled with a sickening sense of horror. The curé's mother was so overcome with having seen her son killed, this gentle simple priest, that she seemed unable to weep and just kept

repeating : ' What a pity ! What a pity ! ' Thérèse Poskin went from her mother to her sister, pale as death. Madame Schmidt was dissolved in tears. She knew a few words of German : with her little daughter clinging to her skirts she had begged in vain for mercy for her husband, saying, which was perfectly true, that he was not an inhabitant of that part of the country and simply happened to be there by chance. And the little child till the last kept calling to her father : ' Forgive me, daddy, if I have been naughty sometimes and hurt you ! ' It was heartrending. As for Leopold Burniaux' wife, she had for the third time that day seen one of her sons killed before her eyes, and she was going about with a dazed expression like a mad woman saying : ' Let us go away from here ! Let us go away from here ! ' But they made us stay.

" During this, I saw our house catch fire as well as the church and the school. But it was not till mid-day that those buildings fell in. As I watched the home of my childhood, so full of memories, burning before my eyes, my heart was full to overflowing. It was full of memories ; and as I thought of all the little things that meant

so much to me there and that I should never see again, I felt that my heart would surely break. After these hours of anguish we were given a passport, or rather one was given for us to a man who came from Romedenne, with the order to take us either to Omezée or Rosée. But we were forbidden to go anywhere else. We had to wait till the troops passed before crossing the road. There were infantry, cavalry and innumerable automobiles. Many officers passed on horseback, and they said that the emperor's son was among them and that he was going to Rocroi. I forgot to say that, before shooting our poor fellow-citizens, the Germans had brought a mitrailleuse and stationed it in front of us, as if they meant to massacre the lot. But soon they made a half-turn, took it away and put it with some others which stood a little way off, and with which the Germans had commenced the destruction of the first houses of Romedenne. I have been told since that the church and one hundred and twenty houses were reduced to ashes. . . .

"Once on the open road, by making a wide detour, we managed to reach Omezée. All the time that the burning was going on the soldiers

were pillaging, taking everything down to the very pots of jam.

“We reached the wood, where I found my brother, and told him of all the horrors that I had just witnessed. When I spoke of Durdu, he reminded me that he had been the chief alderman of the parish, and that the poor man had done all in his power to prevent, on the part of the civilians, any hostile acts whatever against the enemy. At the beginning of the war he had read to us, at the church door, after evening prayers, an announcement which he was going to have posted up in all the villages and in which he asked for the calm and rigorous observance on the part of the people of the injunctions of the authorities. He asked also that arms should be deposited in the parish school, and so well had he been obeyed that all the guns, even those that were quite out of date, had been brought and locked up. Therefore we could scarcely believe that a young girl of Surice had fired on a German officer and killed him! ‘Had he been killed, it must have been,’ said our neighbours, ‘by the French soldiers ambushed behind the hedges on the road at the entrance to the village,’ and they added that at Morville and

Anthée *the same pretext had been given* as a reason for shooting the people and pillaging and burning the houses. . . .

“I have related what I have myself seen. After we met in the wood of Omezée my brother and some other people from Surice, they told us that a man named Marron had been shot in his house, seated on his chair, and another named Élisée Pierrard. Others had been killed here and there, but I do not know their names, and I am ignorant of the circumstances of their deaths, except that of poor old Adèle Soumoy, who was burned in her bed. My sister returned to Surice on September 2nd or 3rd. Of the one hundred and thirty houses which, roughly, made up the village, only eight had escaped The village seemed dead.

“All that I have stated is the exact and absolute truth.

“I affirm it on my soul and conscience, and I am ready to repeat it on oath. Moreover, it will be possible, when the time comes, to procure the testimony of all those who, like myself, lived through these awful happenings.” *

* This touching testimony, whose very simplicity makes it at times sublime, is that of Mdle. Aline Dierix de Tenhamme.

*"A girl of fifteen fired on one of our officers!"—
"Kill me too! Kill me too!"—"I am too young!
I do not want to die!"—*A mad accusation, a
heartrending entreaty, a massacre, a child's sob.
In that is comprised the sentence, the Calvary
and the crucifixion of a hundred villages and
hamlets.



v.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRETEXT AND THE EXPLANATION.

No honest, upright man can read such statements unmoved. But certain neutrals, while filled with indignation, may think that this is an instance, especially when these things take place in the villages, of individual actions that are almost inevitable in any war, when the brute that is within every man has the ascendancy, and he becomes intoxicated with his animal strength. Though some of the facts revealed by the Commission of Inquest can be regarded as undisciplined acts, though sometimes we see an officer interfere and put an end to it, and even go so far as to punish, yet there is unquestionable evidence that the massacres and pillage and incendiarism and all the crimes that have devastated and are devastating Belgium to-day are the result of definite instructions, of a system, the outcome of a hard, clever, scientific organisation.

German science has, moreover, made the celebrated confession. *Our soldiers did not commit any act of undisciplined cruelty** (keine zuchtlose Grausamheit) affirm the Ninety-three in their manifesto. The Ninety-three exaggerate. We quite admit that there must have been some actions of cruelty committed without command; but these illustrious men who have blindly signed without verifying any of the facts this lying, pedantic and categoric document, which convicts them before posterity, did not imagine that in their endeavour to clear their nation of such horrible accusations they were stating a shameful truth. The cruelty of the German army is disciplined. The *Nein, Razi-eren!* of Sommerfeld, seated in the square of Termonde, is typical of this discipline!

Ashamed occasionally of their behaviour the Germans silence their consciences with the trite remark: "*It cannot be helped; such is war!*" It is their answer to everything. They imagine they legitimatise all by this easy, ready response.

* The official translation of the manifesto reads: "Neither undisciplined nor cruel actions." The German text must be compared with this to show that it is an instance of one of those alterations—there are four or five—that the Ninety-three have subjected their text to, in translating it into French.

"Do not burn this house," said a lady of Melle to them; "there are several children inside, my own and seven little nephews and nieces." The incendiary brushes past her, and goes on his way shrugging his shoulders, saying, "*Such is War.*" The village is ablaze: to the inhabitants who are escaping they explain that it cannot be helped: "*Such is War!*" After a massacre of the inhabitants, if the women are weeping, they sometimes say to them, meaning to console them, "*Such is war!*" and that phrase excuses everything.

Another confession! In the eyes of those men deliberating committing crimes, war is apparently a state of affairs where ordinary morality is replaced by another morality. It is a deformation of conscience, and a deification of brute force. All that is worthy, beautiful and noble ceases to exist. Sentiment vanishes, honour no longer matters; compassion is unknown; justice becomes mere arrogance from the leader who elegantly remarks as he wipes a child's blood from his sabre, "*War is certainly not five o'clock tea,*" to the simple soldier who, trying to find a philosophical explanation of his cruelty makes this same futile remark in bad

French, and feels that in doing so his action loses its criminal qualities.

But this is not enough. Something else is needed to legitimatise to the neutral countries as to the allies, whose morality was not suddenly changed on the day that war was declared, the cruel deeds which are daily increasing, and that are to suit the circumstances christened retaliation, "*It was necessary; the civilians had fired*"—"Civilisten haben geschossen!" That is, as we have already said, the classic phrase, the general pretext for all, which absolves in advance the worst excesses, the ruins, and the massacres. The stern military laws permit a non-combatant (and we must clearly understand what is meant by this term) who takes up arms to be shot, but an individual action cannot excuse collective punishments, and moreover, the "Civilisten haben geschossen" that lets loose these brutes is invariably the most odious lie.

We know that the conventions signed by Germany recognised the Militia (volunteers or regulars) as belligerents if they had at their head a responsible person, and if they wore a distinctive sign that could be recognised in the distance, if they openly carried arms, and if,

in short, they conformed in their operations to the laws and customs of warfare as stipulated in the first article of the Hague Convention. We know that in article three of the same Convention the quality of belligerents is even given to inhabitants of a country not occupied by the enemy, who, "at the approach of the enemy spontaneously take up arms to fight the invading troops without having had time to organise themselves according to the rules stated in the first article," if all the same these armed inhabitants respect the laws and customs of warfare. There was not in Belgium—although had there been it would have been perfectly legitimate—either a Militia or a rising of this kind. The Militia, which is in reality our Territorial army, and which the government had well in hand, was the Garde Civique, whose activity was restricted to the towns. In the villages they are neither armed nor drilled, and in peace times only exist on paper. They were charged at the beginning of hostilities with the guarding of the roads and railways. They were given for uniform the blue blouse with the tricolour ribbons of the combatants of 1830, and they were armed as circumstances permitted. But the enemy, in defiance

of all law, having declared that he would shoot these militiamen, the precaution was taken to disarm them, and put them instead to work in the fields. Their arms, old pistols, swords and other weapons, mostly out of date, were deposited in the town halls by command. The government never ordered the rising *en masse* of the civilians, which, on the contrary, they would immediately have taken steps to suppress. They made such a thing impossible by insisting that all firearms belonging to individuals should be given up. A receipt for them was given to the owners. They were guarded in some hall, duly tied up, each one bearing on a label the owner's name. There were neither bodies of sharpshooters nor isolated "snipers."

Judges have questioned and cross-examined the peasants in the wretched villages where they were said to have fired, but nowhere have the German allegations been confirmed. No one had fired, and no one had even heard firing. Severe inquiries were set on foot in which the prosecutors took part, always with a negative result. I have myself noticed in going over the accounts of the Commission of Inquest that every time an inhabitant has been found sufficiently

courageous to demand, or an Ober-lieutenant honest enough to order before the massacre or burning began, the autopsy of the horse or soldier about to be avenged, it has always been a mauser bullet that has been found in the body, but as a rule there had been no horse shot, no soldier killed. And this cry, the precursor of the drama, is only the expression of a collective instinct eager for its prey, or frequently the excuse of a general who finds that time presses.

I am quite aware that occasionally inventive Germans sick of this "*Civilisten haben geschossen*," which becomes "banal," find other pretexts for their evil deeds and ingeniously try to vary the motive. A witness from Liège quotes some of these:—"It is enough for a motor tyre to burst for all the guns to be levelled ready to shoot in every direction, or for them to find some empty cartridge, or an over sharp paper-knife, or even, as they did at Sittard, the bows and arrows of some archery society that adorned the peaceful inn of the "Roi," alleging the arrows to be poisoned; or else, as at Louvain, they allege simply that the prisoners they are going to shoot threw a bomb; as at Pin, they have spied on the enemy's troops from the summit of the

tower ; as at Vedrin, that a child was carrying an empty German cartridge. They condemn to death a curé at Malines because he was signalling from the summit of a church tower ; they mistook shadows made by the moon on the bell tower for signals. They sent a hail of shot on Limbourg, because at sunset the windows of the church were suddenly illuminated with a fiery glow ; they massacred the population of Louveigné because the inhabitants " have cut off a German major's ears ! " No one has seen him, but an officer who was passing has said so. Should they ask to see this mysterious major, or at least to see his ears, the reply is that there is no time to discuss the matter—and the firing begins.

But these are exceptional cases, away from the ordinary and the classic pretext. The words, "*They have fired,*" are the prelude of almost all the massacres, or serve to excuse all the murders. When the hostages were being led round Louvain, the soldiers shot a blind old man, saying, " He has fired." " The civilians have fired," said an officer who had just given an order to a priest from Hainaut. " I pointed out," says the latter, " that the inhabitants had behaved

very kindly to the soldiers. He replied that that was simply to inspire their confidence, and to secure more chance of shooting them. During this time I heard shots in the neighbouring street. The next day twenty-seven civilians were found there dead." "They have been firing from here," they said at Hastière, opposite the house of Mgr. Carton de Wiart, which they were going to pillage. "The house was absolutely empty, and I had the key in my pocket. In the cellar of a separate outhouse behind were some women and children whom a Catholic German soldier had been feeding for two days. The latter assured me that not only had the civilians never fired, but that he himself had been wounded in the left hand in our garden by a German soldier. . . . The house was then burned."

At Tamines the civilians were guarded at full view in a meadow; none of them attempted to move, and their gaolers began to be bored. It suddenly occurred to an officer to have a little amusement, by no means original but easy and popular. Saying to the prisoners: "Who among you have fired at us?" he took five at random and shot them. Hours passed, and the boredom increased. In vain have the soldiers eaten;

in vain have they played the phonograph or the accordion. The officer feels that only one thing will relieve their boredom, and he asks again: "*Who among you have fired on us?*" They tell how one wretched woman who, seeing her husband lying shot dead before her, asked the officer in command: "What had he done to you?" "He had fired on us." Then she pointed to a little child massacred beside its father, and ironically queried: "And had this child fired on you too?"*

The Burgomaster of C. asked some soldiers who were going through the village on their way from Louvain, proud of their exploits of vandalism, why they had destroyed that city. "Students fired on us with six-chambered revolvers," answered some of them.† "Jesuits turned the mitrailleuse on us," said others; and others again, questioned later, stated that "It was the police who shot at us with guns belonging to the Garde Civique!" In Louvain, which was even then in flames, Professor B., a scholar of European celebrity—walked boldly from one part of the town to another questioning

* See Tenth Report of the Commission.

† Let me observe that in the month of August there are no students at Louvain.

the German soldiers whom he met. All, in answering his indignant exclamations, replied that they had been fired at. "I went up to a soldier who was near me in the Vieux Marché, and asked him: 'What have the inhabitants of these houses done?' He answered: 'They fired on us; we have several killed and wounded; the innocent must suffer with the guilty.' 'Where did they fire from?' 'From "over there,"' he said, pointing to a part of the university building that is not inhabited and where during the vacation there is never a living soul . . ." Further on, the professor asked the same question. The sentry answered without hesitation: "They fired on us from 'over there!'" And with his finger he pointed to a house at the corner of the Rue des Joyeuses-Entrées and the Boulevard, absolutely riddled with shot. "This man was obviously lying," added the professor, "for the house in question was inhabited by an old couple, Monsieur and Madame G., absolutely incapable of any bellicose action." A third sentry was guarding some dead bodies of civilians, a new experience for him. "I asked him what these inhabitants had done to have brought on themselves such treatment. He made the traditional reply, no

doubt instilled into their minds with their military instruction : ‘ *They fired on us ! We have several dead and wounded. The innocent must be punished with the guilty !* ’ ”

Constant refrain ! The triple repetition that we hear over and over again, which is supposed to explain, comprise, and justify everything ! *Such is war ! You have fired ! The innocent must suffer with the guilty*, or, more cynically put, *for the guilty !* Mere passwords that the German soldiers, drilled by their officers, mechanically repeat ; when you press the button, this remark comes out by some reflex action, as a matter of course, sometimes, *à propos* and sometimes not. Frequently, during a massacre, some soldier whose conscience troubles him in spite of himself, feels he must justify his action, and shouts at the inhabitants that he is killing : “ *You have fired on us ! You have fired on us !* ” At Louvain a peaceful financial agent presented himself before the Germans, timidly asking permission to save his papers. “ No ! ” they replied, profiting by the occasion to take him prisoner, “ you have been armed by your administration and you have fired on us ! ” At Ninove a traveller went into the tramway office and asked when the tram

would start. They told him ; then, as he turned to go out, seized him. He was astonished and became indignant ; they simply answered : “ You have fired on us ! ” And he is added to a convoy of prisoners already there who are going to Germany ! The burgomaster and the alderman of a village through which troops are constantly passing every day meet different soldiers, young and old, Bavarian and Pomeranian, sociable and otherwise. When the worthy Flemings, pouring out wine for them, would ask them why they had pillaged such a town, killed a child, ripped open a woman, or used the mitrailleuse on the hostages, all would bring out the same excuse, accusation or sentence. None hesitated or explained. Many said it in all faith, many did not think that the excuse was immoral, the accusation a lie, and the sentence monstrous. A nation accustomed to passive obedience, to cut-and-dried teaching and ready-made phrases !

However, some of them, when cornered, added some sort of explanation : “ We were ordered to fire on all who were escaping,” one of them explained to the Alderman of C., who adds with great wisdom : “ A system which obviously gives the Germans *carte blanche* ! ” They shoot

on the first comer, and the officer permits it ; if he inquires into the matter, they reply that the man was running away or that he fired. " And he, being shot, has obviously nothing to say in the matter ! " " When the civilians have fired," explained a sentry to an advocate of Louvain, " the district belongs to the soldiers." Here we have a still better explanation. It is enough to shout two or three times : "*Civilisten haben geschossen !*" to have the right to destroy, violate and pillage !

When, in all good faith, the inquirer, determined to get some light on the subject, endeavours to track the elusive sharpshooter, what he comes across in the first instance with the accusers is the desire for murder, lust and pillage, that leads them to invent their lie. According to their fatigue, excitement or boredom, the battalion which passes through a village arbitrarily decides its fate. It is sufficient if a German fires into the air, or simply shouts that a shot has been fired. The officer is only too ready to give the order to pillage : all the more so since he will profit by it himself. At Blegny a witness saw a German motor cyclist stop, raise his revolver and discharge it. At once a party of men ran forward,

and the carnage began. Near there, at Battice, "a German soldier, standing alone beside a house, was seen to level his rifle and fire. Immediately a number of soldiers came up and opened a hot fire on this house. It was the signal for volley firing to begin, and many inhabitants were killed. They seized others, whom they put beside those from Blegny, making them kneel and pray . . ." Then, naturally, they let their lower instincts have free play.

They are prompted by their eagerness to pillage, and their desire for revenge. It is frequently the day after a defeat or an attack that these massacres take place. The success of the Belgian soldiers is paid for by the blood of the Belgian peasants; or when, as often happens, before the entry of the Germans into a village, some audacious patrol of cyclist carbineers—enough can never be said in praise of their bold heroism—has attacked them and killed a large number. These hated carbineers—they call them "*schwartze Teufels*," black devils—are, in the accusations, transformed into guilty sharpshooters. And the same thing happens, to the great detriment of the defended hamlet, if a detachment attacks the rearguard. Let us take this enlightening

dialogue between the parish priest of M. and a German officer: "After Mass, as I was returning home, I saw that there were no soldiers in the street, but as I reached my dwelling a soldier came up, covered me with his rifle and led me before some officers who could speak French. I expressed my astonishment at this behaviour. They agreed that *it was funny*, but that they had orders to act thus and to take me prisoner. They were young, pleasant officers. They permitted me to go home and get my hat and umbrella. Four of them accompanied me, and my sister had to hand me the objects through the door as I was not allowed to enter. I was brought back before a superior officer, who asked me: 'Are you the priest of this parish?' 'Yes.' 'Well, sir, you have allowed the sharpshooters to fire on us!' 'Pardon, captain, I have strongly advised the people not to shoot; an order forbidding it, moreover, has been posted up everywhere besides being printed in the newspapers.' 'Well, monsieur, your influence is not worth much.' 'Undoubtedly, captain, I have not the great influence that you give me credit for, but you may be sure that they are not civilians who have fired

on you, but French troops posted on the heights of C.' 'No, sir, they are civilians!' I remained silent, and the captain, clenching his fists, said to me: 'And since such is the case, our big guns will demolish everything!' " The civilians *must* have fired! . . . The bombardment of Malines, an open, undefended city, was ordered by General Voigt "because the civilians had assaulted a patrol and out of the twelve men that composed it had killed eleven." Now the general *knew* that these eleven men had been killed at the gates of the town by carbineers. The enemy also classes as sharpshooters, according to the temper he is in, gendarmes and mobilised Garde Civiques. And yet the former are the pick of our cavalry, and the others have for two months openly taken part in the campaign as a division of the army under the orders of the general staff. What would the Germans have said supposing we had the upper hand, if we had refused to recognise as belligerents the Uhlans or the Landsturm?

Not only do they long for revenge, often they are executing orders. The decision to destroy or to kill is made in the morning—indeed, often several days before—and the sharpshooters, *deus*

ex machina, only appear at the right moment. Destructions are announced by honest or merciful Germans long before the pretext is brought forward or the tragedy begins. On August 17th an officer was billeted with a notable citizen of Luxembourg. In the course of conversation they mentioned some of the pretty towns of the district, and the Belgian spoke of Dinant. "Alas!" replied the officer, "Dinant is a condemned town!" The Germans were not in occupation of Dinant, and the false accusations that they had been fired on from the interior of a factory were made only a few days later! To an indignant inhabitant, a condescending general declares in this same town that *they are acting on orders*. On the day preceding this "night of Andenne, which was caused, we learn, by the most terrible attack of the Belgian sharpshooters,"* and it was to be the reason for the bloodthirsty "retaliation" which took place, several officers and soldiers had announced it in the neighbouring villages; notably an officer who was billeted six kilometres from Andenne, in the house of Madame S., who was warned not to go there as "terrible things" were

* *Gazette de Francfort*, 6 Janvier, 1915.

about to take place. And a soldier advised an inhabitant of Aërschot, who was contemplating flight, not to delay, as "we are going to pulverise the town!" On Thursday, August 20th, two days before the civilians "*were to fire on the troops*" at Jumet, a German officer told a citizen in confidence that the towns of Ransart and Gosselies would be spared, but that the town of Jumet would be sacked and burned! At Vissville, the locality situated fifteen kilometres from Monceau, where it had been decided that the inhabitants would fire on them, and would have to be punished, the Germans wished to burn everything. They stopped in time and excused themselves, saying that they thought they had reached Monceau! At Louvain, on Tuesday, August 25th, in the morning—the firing by the "sharpshooters" was to take place at night—German officers warned Madame B. that she would be wise to go away as Louvain was to be burned . . . which confirms the belief, moreover, that this town was destroyed by superior orders, so as to terrorise Brussels, occupied, and which—for international reasons—they dare not touch.

As it was a question, at Louvain, of a particularly

striking outrage, and as they knew they would be severely criticised, they were not content, at the appointed time, with firing a few shots, which, as a rule, served them both for a pretext and for a signal, they arranged a whole *scenario*; the sharpshooters were not to be simply anywhere, in some nameless street that they never specify; they were to assassinate the German soldiers from the interior of the houses. Let us watch two of the actors. At eight o'clock in the evening two soldiers knocked at the door of M. X.'s house, university professor, saying: "You have soldiers hidden there." "You are mistaken; search the house, if you like." Immediately they go up to the second storey, fling open a window, and discharge their revolvers into the street. At the sound, their "kamarades" appear from all sides, enter and pillage. "All the firing," adds the professor, "began at the same moment, from every quarter of the town." The witnesses are unanimous on this point . . . Here we are at the boulevard, at the place where the "sharpshooters" rush on the garrison. "At eight o'clock," says M. D., "the shooting began. Wishing to see what was happening, we went upstairs, thinking perhaps that the Germans

had been surprised and attacked (from the spectators' point of view the comedy was well acted !), and we saw them hiding behind the trees and shooting, not on adversaries, but on the houses. We heard on all sides the sound of shivering glass as the windows splintered." But there had to be some victims to show the public after this "attack of the sharpshooters," besides the few German soldiers who had been killed in the town during this disorderly shooting. Let us remember that the inhabitants had been duly warned by some grim examples that, if they showed themselves at their windows, they risked death. "Towards eleven o'clock we heard shouting," continues M. D., "and the firing began again. It was then, hiding behind my window, that I saw all the houses on the other side of the street ablaze. On the pavement opposite I saw German soldiers scattering on the ground the contents of a Red Cross waggon, and then I understood what was happening—they were preparing the stage for their comedy. I saw them firing on horses that they had let loose, and whose dead bodies we saw next day on the boulevards."

So well arranged was it that they thought,

when morning came, that they could continue this ingenious farce. Monsieur David, an old, inoffensive and much respected man, had received from some grateful officers a paper stating that his beautiful house in the Station Road was to be spared. A party of soldiers, furious at seeing this good chance of pillage escaping them, dragged to the door-step the dead body of a German hussar already stiff and cold, picked up on the battle-field at Hérent. They brought some civilians before this *victim*, and a lieutenant cried: "Here is a man who has just been killed by shots fired from the windows of this house." This ceremony over, they forced in the door, seized M. David, and shot him. . . . Their farce continues. At mid-day some soldiers guarding one hundred hostages in the boulevard of Diest repeat the pretence—delighted with their sham—of being surrounded by accomplices of their prisoners, who will be made answer for the crime of those invisible enemies. "The soldiers," said one of the prisoners, "were acting a veritable comedy. At a given moment they would dash forward and take shelter behind a lamp-post, a fountain, or in the shadow of the wall, and began to fire upon an enemy who did not exist. Then

they would come back triumphant. 'Now and again some of them even began to fire round us, and my son, who understands German, heard one soldier say to another: 'Take care, or you will have a mishap'; and he replied: 'There is no danger, these are blank cartridges.' " *

Under less sinister circumstances, this masquerade might have been almost amusing. At Namur it was enacted again, but less well arranged. There also a witness is said to have seen the "sharpshooters" attack the Germans: "Towards nine o'clock at night firing was heard in different parts of the town. German troops who were skirmishing advanced along the principal streets, notably the Rue de Fer. I saw soldiers hiding in the doorways and shooting. I heard their bullets ricochet on the walls. This firing had hardly begun when we saw rising from the centre of the town an immense column of smoke and flames, and the tocsin was rung." Flames rose at the same time from the four corners of the town. In the centre, the whole

* A scene of the same kind was got up some days later, when the Minister of the United States and some journalists from neutral countries were admitted to see Louvain. An attack of sharpshooters was organised admirably to take place during their visit, and on the itinerary selected, but no one was duped by it.

Place d'Armes was destroyed, the Town Hall and eighty houses. A fearful disaster ! The fire was successful if the comedy was not, everyone realising that the attack of the "sharpshooters" was once more simply a farce. "I have every reason to believe," goes on the witness, after having described the catastrophe and enumerated the victims, "I have every reason to believe that these crimes were premeditated. The German fusillade burst forth, and the houses were set fire to in five different places—some of them more than a kilometre from the others—almost simultaneously. The population of Namur had been disarmed a fortnight before by the Belgian authorities ; they had been urged to respect their enemies by the government, the military authorities, the local authorities, the clergy and the press ; the town had been abandoned thirty-six hours before by the Belgian and French troops. The population had then not the means, even had they been foolish enough, to attack an overwhelming German army at five different points. *And it seems strange, besides, to find that in precisely these five quarters where the attack was supposed to take place, the German troops should have been by chance furnished with their materials for setting*

fire to the houses, since the shooting coincided with the burning." The Germans themselves realised that this time they deceived no one, and when asked for the details of this sharpshooters' attack, they kept very quiet. "The German officers with whom I spoke later regarding those happenings seemed very anxious to justify themselves from this reproach of having acted like barbarians, but they gave me no exact information. *L'Ami de l'Ordre* (an inoffensive local paper), which had to appear again two days after the burning of the town, was not asked by the German authorities to explain the motives that justified this false retaliation. It inserted with reserve, at the request of the Germans, the German version of the destruction of Louvain, but no attempt was made to give a German version of the destruction of Namur. It would have been impossible, on the spot, to make up some tale with even the semblance of truth."

Having been so unsuccessful in the matter, they give up the attempt, and what is lost in dramatic art is gained in frankness—brutal frankness, perhaps, but it is better than their lies. Why trouble to excuse themselves after all, since they have the upper hand. What use

is it to hide the truth, ugly as it may be, when everyone knows it? What good is it to play at civilisation since their efforts only convince the world more and more that they are Barbarians? Henceforth, they will bluntly state that they are going to assassinate such-and-such a village, and if someone asks why, they will give the real motive—senseless anger, cold-blooded vengeance, grim threats or their Emperor's wish.

Senseless Anger.—Here are two examples among the many. In the village of Houx the Prussians arrived without warning, accused no one, went into no house, and did not stop; they contented themselves with setting fire in passing, with the aid of torches, to all the houses, breaking in the doors, and firing into the houses. On August 18th a German detachment, that is not attacked, stops for no reason and without any warning, perhaps without even knowing where they are, on the road from Purnode, and level their cannons on the peaceful village of Evrehailles. The terrified peasants watch their houses falling in. The fire over, a party of them come back to the village. The commandant ascertains the damage done, coldly declares that it is not sufficient, and that "more must be done."

Are they not an admirable people who, after hearing the words of this monster, can still remain calm and resist the temptation of seizing the first weapon with which to attack them ?

Cold-blooded Vengeance.—On August 28th seven men from the village of Boeckt, near Elewyt, are shot because in the course of an attack the evening before the Belgian soldiers had entrenched themselves behind the houses of these seven fathers of families. One of them, doubtless “ more guilty ” than the others, was buried alive. Some days later an officer announced to the eminent citizens of Lebbeke : “ You are going to see your town destroyed by fire.” Why hide the motive ? *It is to avenge the deaths of six Germans killed in the precincts of the village by the Belgian army.*

Grim Threats.—At Huy the Germans sent a man called Paul Duvivier, of Strée, to the Belgian Commandant at La Sarthe to warn him that if his troops went on firing the village of La Sarthe would be completely razed to the ground. On the order of Commandant Spohr, the curé of Veldwezel was forced to read in the pulpit that if the order of mobilisation of the class of 1914 were carried out the village would be set

fire to and the inhabitants shot. Major von Forstner, when he approached Termonde, declared that if he heard another shot in the direction of the town, he would bombard it immediately. Better still : arrived at the same town—faithful collaborator of Sommerfeld—he had already nearly destroyed, he repeats the offence, and says to an alderman : “ There are still some factories in the neighbourhood of Termonde ; if your soldiers ”—the Belgians were encamped on the other side of the Escaut—“ if your soldiers fire on any of ours, these factories will be destroyed as the whole town has been.” Perhaps during military instruction, after having repeated the simple principles of their morality of war that we already know, perhaps they have pointed out the efficacy of such a proceeding. Do not some simple soldiers say to the witness V. that the King of the Belgians will be forced to surrender, and that this destruction and incendiarism are means employed for that end ; and another German, who condoles with a Louvain alderman, adds that the town should, after such terrible happenings, insist on King Albert’s submission.

The Emperor’s Wish.—But why refrain from

doing evil when they are only obeying orders? They do not hide that orders as to what they are to destroy and what they are to leave come to them from the highest quarters. "A doctor of Hainaut," says the Abbé X., "has in his possession a map belonging to the German staff with the places to be destroyed indicated on it. This map was given him by an officer." And M. J., from Termonde, having asked a German general the reason for the martyrdom of this town, the officer replied that "the Emperor has given explicit orders to burn certain towns decided on beforehand."

And these orders are so brutal that in the midst of their cruelty even the soldiers sometimes disobey them from weariness or disgust. "Do not cry," they said to some women who were weeping near Charleroi; "we are not going to do a quarter of what we have been commanded." The same thing is said regarding Andenne. It is related that when Schoenman lay dying, a few days after the sacking of this town, in the hospital of Huy, two Belgian nuns who were dressing his wounds said to him a few moments before the end: "We have need of the grace of God to tend your wounds after all the sufferings

you have inflicted on us!" " *Forgive me, Sisters,*" replied this man soon to appear before his God, tears rising to his eyes, " *I have not carried out half the instructions I received.*"

CHAPTER XIV.

SCIENTIFIC INCENDIARISM.

It is not only the soldiers who commit atrocities : there is evidence everywhere that the officers take their share in it. Thanks to them and through their efforts, cruelty, according to their own formula, remains or becomes discipline. What we, who have no special morality for war, would call *crime*, they designate *military operations*. An important part of their rôle is to direct these operations. It is on their command that civilians are placed, when the troops are marching, or even fighting, before them : it is impossible to deny it. It is acting on their orders that the firing—not the ordinary firing, we are not discussing that, but the firing at random through the streets of a village—is organised. It is with their authorisation that there is violation and torturing. . . . Individually they are neither more refined nor more cruel than their

men. When they entered Aërschot, it was an officer at the head of his well-disciplined men who fired on a young woman leaning over her balcony holding a little child. And at Tamines, when the mitrailleurs could stand no more, so disgusted were they with the horror of it all, officers continued the slaughter of the inhabitants, taking the place of their men and calmly turning the grim handle of the mitrailleuse. It was a commandant who, on August 27th, at W., met Sister Aldegonde, and asked her where the curé was. "Probably in the presbytery," replied the nun. Immediately he whipped out his revolver, held it to the poor girl's breast, and said to her: "Come with me, and if I do not find the curé in the presbytery I shall kill you, and I will order the village to be burned!" So the chivalrous Germans address women. It was a lieutenant of the 163rd Company of Infantry Reserves who, having shut the women and children up in a convent at T., where they were kept for several days, threatened to kill the first one who moved, and to kill, in addition, the priests who were prisoners in another room. It was officers who, at Monceau-sur-Sambre, whilst they were firing on the inoffensive people,

blew their whistles to indicate when to begin or stop firing. Scattered examples taken at random. We have already seen a hundred times in the course of these pages how the officers interfere, and it is only necessary here to find out who is responsible to recall their constant participation.

It is during the burning of a town or village that we can best see them at work. It is they who give the orders and superintend the carrying out of them, and who, when the body of "*Pionnierens*," specially reserved for this work, is not there, give careful directions to ensure a fine blaze. At Rethy the Report of the Judicial Commission sent to examine the district describes the incendiaries entering every house, in good order, carefully setting fire to each, room by room, to the curtains, the garments, and the mattresses: these are only Uhlans, flying squadrons without proper implements. But merely for their own satisfaction they take care to have a really beautiful fire, as at Ham-sur-Sambre when, on August 23rd, on Sunday, they burned, to amuse themselves on this day of rest, a whole street, house by house. When it is a larger squadron they have the proper implements and the kind of ammunition that is necessary. At Schaffen

each house was first soaked with petrol or naphtha (these liquids were contained in the most perfected receptacles). At Tamines the fire was started by a kind of fusée that the soldiers carried with them. Then there are incendiary bombs that they throw on the houses either to set fire to them or to make them burn more quickly. They have also incendiary pastilles (gelatinous nitro-cellulose), of which the Commission of Inquest's documents give a detailed chemical analysis. . . . All that is not done at night, but calmly in broad daylight before the passers-by—workmen and curious loiterers—who gaze at what is going on and describe it in detail. "I saw the Uhlans sprinkling the walls of the houses of the Rue Neuve, with a liquid that I took to be petrol, since when they set fire to it it blazes up immediately. They used for the purpose of sprinkling the houses a little pump with a funnel." "I was, on August 25th, in front of the Café de l'Harminoe, at Aërschot, when I saw a soldier with a thing like a lance in his hands. There was a strong smell of naphtha, and suddenly the house caught fire." "I saw," says a third, "the Germans, before setting fire to a house, sprinkling over it a liquid

with a powerful odour, by means of an instrument shaped like a stick."

All the men are skilful at this work; but some companies are specially set apart for it. At Ceroux-Mousty a witness saw them taking up their positions in perfect order. "The burning was done by an organised body. Some men threw the grenades, others squirted petrol or benzine by means of pumps." At Monceau-sur-Sambre, the streets being longer, the houses more numerous, two lots of men were required to do the work: "One party broke open the houses, smashing the doors with the butts of their rifles, the other following, threw in lighted pieces of inflammable material (rather an incongruous assortment here), pastilles or grenades or even liquids, petrol or naphtha, carrying them in special receptacles." Regarding the happenings around Charleroi, the Belgian Commission has received a complete report made by a trustworthy inquirer in which the invading army can be seen changing almost before the battle is over into an incendiary body. I quote a long extract with particular pleasure because the information that is given is mixed with most judicious observations: "I have specified before," says

the inquirer, "in what parts of the district this methodical burning began. I say methodical, for it seems that this is a question of wilfully prepared crimes, for which the soldiers have been specially fitted-out, . . . Having spent a whole morning in a street where the Germans were at work, I was able to observe closely their methods and to personally note how everything was deliberately arranged for destruction. After the order had been given, bodies of men could be seen going along each side of the road, following one another very closely. Those in front broke in the doors and the windows with the butts of their rifles, while others, armed with axes, finished off this work; through the openings thus made a third group threw an inflammable liquid—probably naphtha—and then lighted torches were flung in. The dwelling was doomed to complete destruction. . . . It has been said that if the doors were left open the inhabitants escaped the fury of the Germans, but the Inquest has shown that this was not so, the only difference being that, in the houses where the inhabitants had left their doors open, the first storey was set fire to at the same time as the ground floor. . . . *What adds to the*

veracity of what I am affirming regarding their method of destruction, is that in general they are the dwellings along the roads where the German troops are passing that are burned. There are few examples of isolated houses, such as would be the case if they were deeds committed by groups of soldiers, not directly under the surveillance of their officers."

The inquirer heard the testimony of witnesses, and he verifies what he himself has seen by their account: "Whilst I was stationed in the Chaussée of Brussels," says one of them, "I saw the Germans burn eight or nine houses. They made holes in them with the aid of an axe, lit some very inflammable matter that they carried in their pockets and threw it into the interior of the houses. If that did not succeed, they squirted the interior with a liquid contained in a little vial and then set fire to this. I saw my own house burned in this fashion." According to another witness it must be noted that at Landelies, "a soldier's knapsack was found to contain a bottle of petrol and naphtha, probably for use in the burning of houses." They even took the inhabitants' own petrol and used it to burn their dwellings. "At Montigny-le-

Tilleul," continues this reporter, "one hundred and twenty-five litres of petrol were seized from a shop and from private houses. . . . I have attached to this report a scrap of the firebrand which the German soldiers use to start the fire with. It is a fine strip of wood rolled round a bobbin of which they break off a morsel. . . . It therefore seems quite clear," he concludes, "that everything was prepared beforehand for these crimes of devastation, and that burning is considered a method of warfare by the German army. What confirms this idea is that, if we are to believe certain declarations, it was on the explicit order of the officers that the soldiers acted thus." And he mentions, in conclusion, many witnesses, one of whom saw the officer commanding the 41st Company of the 10th Regiment of Infantry order his men to set fire to the houses on the left of the road, and another, a Prussian subject, who declares: "As soon as the soldiers found that the French were firing on them, an officer stopped his men and called out in German: '*The pigs! They are firing on us! Let us burn and destroy everything.*'"

In the carrying out of these orders—we become more and more convinced of it—nothing

is left to chance. When the fury of the fire abates, the soldiers can be seen, as at Aërschot, "taking off some slates here and there from the roofs, so as to allow the flames free play," and when the men's ardour abates, the officers can be heard, as at Sempst, calling as they walk among the burning houses: "*Brent! Brent!*" Sometimes, to get on quicker, it is not only a picked company but a whole regiment that is directed to start the fire. An officer on horseback gives his orders before each house, according to the aspect of the dwelling and its size: "One man here, three here, five here!" In this quick manner, in half an hour the execution is finished. The only disagreeable surprise they might get is with the fire escape. They take care to prevent that. At Louvain the German authorities had the fire escapes destroyed before setting fire to the town. At Namur they arrested the Chief of the Fire Brigade, who, thinking only of his duty, hastened to the Town Hall at the first sound of the tocsin. . . . Moreover, if the inhabitants themselves try desperately to put out the flames, or at least to arrest their progress, the soldiers, as at Jumet, fire on them.

They make use of a fire for two purposes. At

Liège, while the houses in one street were being burned, they fired with rifles and with the mitrailleuses on the citizens who were flying from their burning houses. A splendid economy of time! Fire and sword united. At Averbode, the German commandant tells a witness that "*he has not come there to fight, but to burn the village!*" Once more their low minds are revealed in these episodes. An officer of some other nationality who had been ordered to carry out such a task might perhaps have obeyed, but would have blushed with shame. The German officer sees no humiliation in this action, no dishonour, war meaning for him first of all destruction. Why should he hesitate about the method he employs? He is incapable of understanding that there is any difference between the sword and the petrol flask.

It sometimes happens, however—either by shame or discipline—that the invading army abstains from the glorious and pleasing duty of burning. That is when the "*Pionniers*" are at hand. They undertake the important fires in the large centres, and their outfit is the most complete, the newest and the most homogeneous of all; like the old helmets that, on the appear-

ance of a new model, are used to ornament the hoary heads of the Landsturm, their tinware, when a new invention has revealed some more ingenious contrivance, is distributed among the ordinary soldiers and replaced in their case by some instrument of the latest make. It must be owned, all the same, that the common soldier, with less perfect means at his disposal, works nearly as well as this specialist Heros, so much so that one might easily confuse their work. But no matter ! The professional prestige of the "*Pionniers*" is so great that the others retire in their favour, as at Termonde, where an officer replied to a woman who was begging him to spare her dwelling, before Sommerfeld had spoken even, " I am sorry, madame, but the burning is not my affair ; those who are coming will look after it, and I must give way to them ! " Surely such division of labour is the last word in industrial war !

Let us do homage to their splendid organisation, in one of the chief theatres, of their operations at Termonde itself. The Belgian general, who conducted a careful inquest on the subject of their proceedings, has communicated his conclusions to the Government : " A company was

encharged with the destruction of the houses. They had central reservoirs where each man, wearing a pneumatic belt, might go and provide himself with an inflammable liquid to spray on the wood of the dwellings outside ; then another man, furnished with a special glove, covered with phosphorus, went along the sprayed houses and rubbed his glove over the wood part, thus setting fire to them at once, and making it possible to burn a whole street in a quarter of an hour. To increase the fury of the fire, the men threw inflammable matter—a sample of which I send you—into the houses. (Another variety of it was compressed gun-cotton.) One could understand that after such splendid work the other soldiers dared not interfere, and that, when the “*Pionniers*” have to interrupt their operations—as we have already seen—to blow up the railway stations, they prefer to wait for their return to continue and complete the destruction that has been so well begun.

At Louvain it was again the “*Pionniers*” who were employed. Let us take this extract : “ We had passed,” says Monsieur D., “ along the station road, already partly in flames. The work of destruction was going on. There were two

squads busy at it. The first, armed with axes, broke in the doors. When that was done, the second squad arrived, pushing little carts containing inflammable matter, benzene or tar, which they throw into the interior of the houses. Immediately the whole place was in flames." After all, what the "*Pionniers*" do is not so very wonderful. We have seen some infantrymen do just as well at Jumet—as well, probably, but not so quickly. Another Louvain witness testifies to the rapidity with which they work: "They set fire to several houses in the Rue des Joyeuses-Entrées. This terrible operation only took two minutes; just time to break a pane of glass and fling a ball of inflammable matter into the room and it is done!"

The "*Pionniers*" acts are more deliberate than the others even. They make no mistakes, and burn exactly what they have been told to burn. They respect unquestioningly what they have been told to respect. They are admirable men, but their dull, stolid obedience is the most abominable testimony to the barbarous methods the Germans are employing in this war. They have been told: "Burn the wealthy quarters of the town!" They have burned them. They

have been told: "Don't touch the houses belonging to the Duke of Arenberg"—whom the people of Louvain thought a Belgian, but who is really a German—and they have left intact all the houses bearing, like some sacred sign, the name of the Château d'Héverlé! They have been told: "Burn the Church of St. Peter, and set fire at once to the Library!" and immediately they have taken their inflammable balls and burettes to the church and the university.

"*It is not true,*" says the statement of the German intellectuals, "*that our troops have brutally destroyed Louvain. Traitorously attacked by the enraged population, they have had, much against their will, to retaliate and fire upon a part of the town. The greatest part of Louvain has remained intact. The celebrated Town Hall is entirely preserved, and at the risk of their lives our soldiers protected it from the flames.*" That is all! Not another word about Louvain, or the University, the Library, the Church, the pillage and the burning. Were it possible to believe this brief statement, Louvain might have been fired on in the necessity of retaliating. The bursting of the shells might have accidentally set fire to a part of the town, and the German sol-

diers might have saved these marvels at the risk of their lives, and civilisation ought to thank them for their heroic behaviour.

Need one, after the authentic accounts of witnesses, after the mention of certain characteristic facts like the destruction of the fire escape, after the most unanswerable documents, need one refute once more this lying version in which there is no burning, nor pillage, nor university, nor "*Pionniers*"? All those who have seen the soldier incendiaries are mistaken; there have only been soldier firemen saving the treasures of the town!

Would they have bombarded a town full of German soldiers? They fired a few shots in the middle of the night—all part of the grim and grotesque theatrical scene that they arranged, and that I have related elsewhere.*

And what an unexpected confession is con-

* M. H.'s testimony is positive on this point. The town had been on fire since eight o'clock at night. The Library was burning, the "*Pionniers*" were circulating already in the station road and elsewhere, only respecting the houses on which an official notice had been put—will they now deny the burning?—signed and sealed by "*Der Etappen Kommandant*." and the exact text of which I now give, with the parallel translation: "*Dieses Haus darf nicht betreten werden. Es ist strengstens verboten Häuser in brand zu setzen ohne genehmigung der Kommandantur.*" —Do not enter this house. It is strictly forbidden to set fire to houses without authorisation from the Kommandantur.

tained in that little sentence regarding the preservation of the Town Hall. The Germans were indeed masters of the flames, since they could save what they wished. Having set fire immediately and deliberately to the church and the university—"I can testify," says a Dutch witness, "to the fact that the Church of St. Peter was deliberately set on fire"—they did not wish to save them. It was, all the same, in their power to do so, for the "*Pionniers*" are furnished with everything, even with what is needed to put out the fire. "Our house was set on fire," says M. R., "on Friday, but thanks to the director of the prison, who was afraid the flames might reach his establishment, the Germans put it out, using stuff which extinguished the fire immediately." What remains of the defence of the German intellectuals except a new proof of their clumsy lying?

CHAPTER XV.

ORGANISED PILLAGE.

AFTER the army of incendiaries comes the army of thieves. Here we find no special companies. Everybody, by the mere fact of being a soldier, has the right to form part of the great organisation of pillage. This is arranged and executed like the burning, coldly and methodically—but more unanimously, for everyone takes part and profits by it—soldiers, officers, doctors—the “*Pionniers*” themselves even. Is this not the reward for their labour?

It is also a method of warfare, and they make good use of it. It is thoroughly carried out. Take Louvain for instance. “Pillaging,” says the official Report, “began on the 27th, and lasted a week. In companies of six or eight, the soldiers broke in the doors or smashed the windows, went down to the cellars, got drunk on the wine,

damaged the furniture, broke open the safes, and stole the money, pictures, works of art, silver, linen, wine and provisions." The soldiers, states a witness, conducted by a sub-officer, went from house to house, breaking in the shop windows and doors. A cart of some description to carry away the booty was stationed in the street. Sometimes an officer helped to remove the merchandise. Let us take Tongres: "The ten thousand inhabitants were driven from the town to facilitate the pillage. The town once evacuated, the soldiers burned and pillaged the shops, stole the pictures and silver, which they piled up in the streets, and then put into wag-gons." Or, again, Namur: "From August 26th the people of Namur were only subjected to theft and pillage. In several houses that I visited, where the officers were billeted, they had broken all the furniture, stolen the linen, the wine, and even the dresses of the ladies of the house and their daughters." Or Malines: "The furniture was transported to empty premises near by, then packed into the trains for Germany. Twenty-eight trains were needed. The Justice of the Peace declared to the Commandant that it was impossible for him to carry out his duties,

and that it was ridiculous to convict with theft some poor wretch, for having taken some few cigars, for theft was being organised on a big scale by the Germans." But what did the protest of the Justice of the Peace matter to them—who was, moreover, at once made prisoner? Let us take Andenne: "Bodies of soldiers, under the command of officers, broke in the doors and the shop windows, and pillaged the contents. Others, also directed by officers, took away the furniture and other kinds of merchandise, which were put into sacks and packed in large carts. The pillage was conducted in the most important streets." What an unconsciously expressive sentence, "the pillage was *conducted*," as if it were a reconnoitring expedition, or a patrol, or an attack! It was conducted, moreover, in the best districts!

It is perhaps more odious in the poor quarters, where it is also "*conducted*." To make a list of the villages pillaged, it would simply mean making a list of the Belgian villages themselves. They conduct the pillage in them with the same order and ceremonial. "Entering Orp-le-Grand on 15th August," says a witness from this village, "the Germans were followed by great transport

waggon. They entered private houses, and took away everything, all the food and wine. They broke open the drawers and pillaged right and left. Their operations were directed " (this witness has also found the right word) "by officers." M. V., Alderman of B., was taken as hostage. He offered the officer who was to be billeted in his house that night all the keys of his dwelling, and of any of the pieces of furniture that were locked. "*Those keys are no use,*" said the officer. The next day all the doors had been broken in, all the furniture smashed, and the house sacked from top to bottom, "Not," remarks the witness, "for the needs of the army, but according to any impertinent or mean caprices of the pillagers," and he adds: "We have noticed that this pillage takes place and is permitted by the German authorities, for their discipline is such that a sign from one of the officers would suffice to prevent a man from touching a farthing in the occupied village." On August 20th a German authority coldly remarked to the Burgomaster of Wolverthem—where the invaders had been well received—that all the male population must leave the town in three hours on pain of death. Everybody went away, and

the pillage of their poor cottages began. In the country towns, however, the château is generally the goal. In the château of Monsieur Marbaix, at Flémalle-Haute, Dr. Pieper, a German major, helped by his orderly, carried off the bronzes and works of art and sent them to Germany. Near Oudenarde they pillaged the château of M. Van Damme; the official Report states that they heaped into little carts and into the officers' automobiles everything that they could find. And there are many other such instances.

They take, indiscriminately, both what is valuable and what is not. Objects useless—to the victor—are destroyed, as at T., where, pillaging the convent in which they had been housed, the grateful guests took away from the schoolrooms the poor children's slates and copy-books and indiarubber, and burned them in heaps. They set fire on the pavement to the furniture of the people whose dwellings they were rifling. What is not worth taking away is good enough to break and burn. Some articles are in great request. The taste for pianos has taken the place of the taste for clocks. One day seven hundred could be counted in the station at Malines, all going to delight some blue-eyed

Gretchen, equally greedy for booty, whether she admires "Siegfried" or the "Merry Widow." But all these thefts are not destined to be individual presents. Very often the pillaged goods become the property of the Empire. Did not the Cologne papers announce in December the public sale in one of the town squares of valuable stallions taken from our farms and horse-breeders? Bought, if one might believe it! Not at all! If, sometimes, a requisition order is given, it is more or less of a joke. A rather grim joke sometimes: "Payable by France," or a particularly amusing pleasantry, "Order for hanging." When these thieves are given a lesson that does not emanate, as at Malines, from a simple Justice of the Peace, they are greatly astonished. In Brabant the Germans pillaged until not a stick remained the château of a nobleman, M. T. He resolutely went and protested to the Governor, who began by denying it, and then authorised M. T. to go to the Entrepot at Brussels and find what belonged to him among the booty collected there. Going through the sheds, conducted by an officer, M. T. saw a great many nailed-up cases waiting to be taken away. They showed him those belonging to his district and

opened some of them. He found here and there some article belonging to him, put it aside, and went on having the cases opened. The officer finally became impatient, and, interrupting his search, suggested that he should take from the cases already opened the equivalent of what had been stolen from him. M. T. replied that he would have nothing to do with any such robbery. "Robbery!" repeated the amazed officer, not understanding him.

Sometimes simple soldiers understand better than their generals, and they are rather ashamed of their behaviour. They know that, in the eyes of their officers, soldiers who pillage are not disobedient, but are, on the contrary, only faithfully carrying out orders, and they pillage sometimes as a mere matter of duty, and much against their grain. The infantryman Klein, whose diary is before me, ends his account of the organised pillage of Louvain with this expression of disgust: "This day's work has disgusted me more than I can say"; and another soldier, at W., bringing money—the proceeds of his theft—to a nun, said to her: "Here, sister, take this and give it to charity. Do not despise me. I am forced to pillage, but I am not a thief." To

silence any possible scruples they generally begin by sending the men into the cellars first of all, for drink makes them relish their task more. The superior officers, whom one might think would be more discreet, are quite ready for pillage. They see it carried out before their eyes, often for their own benefit, cynically, calmly. They, as much as the inferior officers, are simply barbarians, whom the products of a more civilised population amaze, and who pack up pell-mell in their big cases silver, chromo-lithographs, ball-dresses and bed-clothes. It was the Duke of Gronau who, in the month of August, after the peaceful occupation by the general staff at Villers-Notre-Dame, directed the removal of 146 pieces of plate, 236 silver-gilt spoons, 3 gold watches, 9 savings bank pass-books, 1,500 bottles of wine, 62 fowls, 32 ducks, numerous works of art, and a large quantity of baby-clothes, and it was the Kaiser's own son—His Royal Highness Prince Eitel Fritz—this I know, not through the Commission of Inquest, but by my own personal knowledge, and from a very sure source—who having spent a week in a château, near Liège, with M. X., accompanied by the Duke of Brunswick and the Baron von Mirbach, thanked

his hosts by having packed up before their eyes all the dresses he could find in the wardrobes of madame and her daughters, delicate materials that will deck in imitation of Paris the bouncing beauties of Potsdam and Hanover.

It is from soldier to officer, from officer to prince, from prince to the general of the army, the same system, the same cruelty, the same greed for booty. "*No undisciplined cruelty!*" No, but theft and lies, cowardice and brutality, incendiarism and murder, all arranged methodically and carried out by the order of the emperor and his generals.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ADMISSION OF THEIR GENERALS.

IF, after such conclusive evidence as is contained in the preceding pages, describing the perfect organisation and the calmly deliberated and scientifically carried out atrocities that have taken place in Belgium—if, after that, there are still any who doubt, I would refer these incredulous neutrals, so obstinate in their blindness, to the Seventh Report of the Belgian Commission of Inquest, where the most crushing evidence has been collected of this responsibility among the generals—the least contestable evidence since it contains the very proclamations, in all their brutal shamelessness, of von Emmich, von Bülow, and other assassins. Some other proclamations, that I shall quote, are still unpublished, having only been divulged after the printing of the Seventh Report.

Must we prove, on the one hand, by an exceptionally frank *order of the day*, that these *civilisten haben geschossen* is an odious lie, and on the other hand that all this carnage has been not only unpunished, but even authorised? This is what Major von Bassewitz said to his men the day after the supposed retaliation at Huy:—

“ Last night, firing took place. There has been no proof that the inhabitants of the town still possess arms, nor has it been proved that any of the population took part in the firing. On the contrary, appearances would lead one to suppose that the soldiers have been under the influence of alcohol, and have fired in the unaccountable dread of an attack by the enemy. With few exceptions, the conduct of the soldiers during the night has been shameful. When the officers or the non-commissioned officers set fire to the houses without permission or at the command of the commandant, or, in this case, of the oldest officer, and when they encouraged the troops by their own behaviour to burn and pillage, they set an example that is regrettable in the highest degree. I await a severe inquiry into the attitude of the military towards the life and property of the civil population everywhere, and, meantime,

I forbid them to fire in the town except on the command of an officer. In consequence of the shocking behaviour of the troops a non-commissioned officer and a soldier have been seriously wounded by German bullets."

Of the civilians killed, there is no mention made. They are not worth the trouble. But this man is singularly frank, confessing that the burning may be methodical or ordered, and the massacres legal. He yet makes a pretence of justice and respect of human life. He is not penetrated with the traditional spirit of German command that has been in existence since Bismarck's day; he does not think of the usefulness of spreading terror and of using atrocities as an essential element in the tactics of invasion, at the time when great numbers of military are passing, in order that they may be able later to occupy the town with a few men of the Landwehr! Other generals follow the tradition better, and share the great ideal of their empire!

On August 21st, at Louvain, the general in command had a proclamation posted up in French and German, threatening to destroy the towns and villages where the civilians had fired on the troops, adding that already it had been

proved that the inhabitants had indulged in acts "of the most melancholy cruelty" (*sic*). "Printers versed in the art of printing, state," says the witness H., "that these bills had been printed in Germany." Besides, *mayors* and not *burgomasters* are mentioned. Ready-made proclamations that the generals bring with them in their luggage, having decided long before leaving Germany that there would be sharpshooters, assaults and necessary retaliations and other things essential to the proper carrying out of the invasion!

These retaliations, even if they are individual, necessarily include burning. The Commandant von Otto posted up, on August 23rd, in different towns of the district of Charleroi that "anyone in whose house a weapon should be found will be shot and his house burned." At Châtelet, the Freyherr von Maltzahn intimated, by means of printed posters that "any inhabitant who houses a wounded Belgian or French soldier must declare it, or they will be exposed to the risk of being hanged and their house burned." But, as a general rule, these punishments, provoked by an isolated act, go far beyond the family of the "guilty person."

At Charleroi, the general in command forbade all gatherings, threatening the transgressors with being made "*prisoners of war*" and sent to Germany, and added: "Each district where the troops have been fired on will be burned to the ground!"

On August 22nd, after the massacre of Andenne, Bülow had posted up at Liège the abominable admission that he intended as a threat:—

"It is with my consent that the general in command has burned all the district and that about a hundred persons have been shot."

On August 25th this same Bülow stuck up at Namur the following proclamation:—

"Belgian and French soldiers must be handed over as prisoners of war before four o'clock in front of the prison. Citizens who do not obey will be condemned to hard labour for life in Germany. The severe inspection of dwellings will begin at four o'clock. *Any soldier then found will be immediately shot.*

"Arms, gunpowder, dynamite, must be deposited by four o'clock. Penalty: shooting."

"German soldiers will be stationed in all the streets and will take ten hostages in each. Should

an attack take place in the street the ten hostages will be shot."

On September 8th Major Dieckmann announces to the people of Grivegnée:—

" Priests, burgomasters and other members of the administration will be placed in the front rank as hostages. The lives of those hostages depend on the population behaving peacefully under all circumstances.

" I exact that all civilians in my district shall show politeness towards the German officers by taking off their hats or raising their hands to their foreheads in military salute. Let them in any uncertainty salute all German soldiers. Any persons not following this injunction may expect the German soldiers to take *any steps they consider necessary* to enforce respect."

On August 27th Lieutenant-General von Nieber writes to the Burgomaster of Wavre to exact from this little town the payment of an exorbitant war tax of three million francs, imposed by the general in command of the 2nd Division of the Army (always Bülow). He ends his letter with these words:—

" If payment is not effected within a reasonable time the town of Wavre will be burned

and destroyed without respect of persons: *the innocent will suffer with the guilty!* ”

On August 17th the Burgomaster of Hasselt, acting on the orders of the superior German military authority, had been forced to post up the following announcement :—

“Should any of *the inhabitants* shoot on the soldiers of the German army, *one-third of the male population* will be shot.”

On September 23rd this atrocious sentence terminates once more a proclamation made by General von Bissing: “Then the innocent must suffer with the guilty!”

On November 1st General von Lütwitz, Governor of Brussels, announces to the inhabitants that the town, in penalty for an “assault” made by a police agent on a German soldier, will have to pay an additional sum of five million francs! . . .

The height of cynicism is reached when, on September 25th and October 5th, Marshal von der Goltz sends throughout the district under his command two proclamations. It is well known how, frequently during the Belgian campaign, scout parties of Belgian cyclists have interrupted the progress of the German escorts

or have blown up, in the heart of the occupied provinces, the railway lines necessary for the enemy's communications. The heroism of some soldiers in going to the very gates of Mons, in the middle of September, to cut the line that joins Brussels to France will never be forgotten. . . . The Field-Marshal wishes to prevent such exploits being renewed, and this is what he announces :—

“ It has recently happened in districts not at present occupied by strong German troops that escorts of ammunition waggons or patrols have been subjected to surprise attacks from the inhabitants. . . . I call the attention of the public to the fact that a register of the towns or villages, *in the neighbourhood* of the place where such attacks have taken place, has been drawn up, and they may expect to receive punishment as soon as the German troops pass their way.”

One of these bold attacks being renewed, a second announcement appears, more brutal still :—

“ In the evening of September 25th the railway line and telegraphic wires between Lovenjoul and Vertryck were destroyed. In consequence, on the morning of September 30th,

the two localities mentioned were made answer for it and had to hand over hostages.

“In future, the localities nearest to where such actions take place—*no matter if they have taken part in it or not*—will be punished without mercy ! ”

Thus all that we have rightly stigmatised, all that international conventions have forbidden, all that justice demands shall be avenged—for instance, the contempt of the life of citizens, maltreatment of prisoners of war, pecuniary penalties, arbitrary actions, criminal incendiarism, the abominable tragedies enacted in villages running with the blood of their slaughtered inhabitants, the collective punishment for individual actions, or even for some action in which the population had no part, but which took place in the neighbourhood—all that is authorised and ordered. All that is carried out openly, under the Kaiser's eyes, this passionate lover of peace and “the well-being of mankind ! ”

VI.



CHAPTER XVII.

A PORTRAIT OF THE OPPRESSOR BY HIMSELF.

THE study of these documents and facts throws into strong relief in all its coarseness the type of the German general. Also the type of the German soldier stands out clearly. Is it the systematic brutality of the general who informs or transforms him? Is it that, in indulging in these cruel horrors, he is really typical of the people whom he represents? Has he lost that rather obscure poetry, that dreamy mysticism whose charm our grandfathers used to praise? We are bewildered to find in all this mass of fighting men the same coarse barbarism towards women, cowardice to the weak, and cold cruelty in the crimes committed, the same desperate attacks on "intellectuals" and priests on God's altars, and on all monuments raised to Beauty. Does there not exist a Germany whose feelings

are deeper, more religious, more thoughtful and wiser, and which we do not find here? Such a Germany does indeed exist, but it is no stranger to the crimes that I have just recounted. All Germany is represented in this war. Professor Lasson has said so: "*The German army is, so to speak, the intelligence and morality of the German people in miniature!*" And when we would name our oppressor, we need not call him the German army; we must accuse the whole nation, the whole race, the whole empire.

M. Joseph Bédier, in an admirable article in the *Revue de Paris*, describes how he has looked in the German soldiers' diaries and pocket-books to find the irrefutable admission of the atrocities committed in France. I am not going to do that for Belgium; what use would it be? since we have already the written confession of their generals; but among the soldiers' diaries that have been found on the prisoners and brought here, among the documents that I have now before my eyes, I have tried to find details that might throw some light on the psychology of the simple soldier—the soldier who speaks out frankly and does not play hide and seek with his conscience—and I have tried, with the help of

his notes and remarks, to understand something of the psychology of the assassin.

It comes as a shock to our civilised minds. It coincides, however, with all his characteristics, with all that we know of him—but these characteristics seem so contradictory!—coarseness, pride, violence, meanness, and with that the poetry of the German race.

There is no heroism displayed in these personal jottings, no delicacy. The great pre-occupation of these soldiers at the front is their food. To exalt the cause that he is defending, to relate heroic incidents, to try and understand something of the progress of the campaign, never enters his head. First of all comes the important question: will he, at mid-day, have beans or sausage to eat—and then he carefully notes how he has digested his beans or sausages of the day before.

Drink is also of great importance. For many Germans the most salient features of this war have been the drunken riots, and the best days have been those on which they have drunk the most. In the midst of ruin and death they only think of drinking. "I had a short time off, during which I visited the town (Aërschot). No one

could imagine the state it is in. . . . In my whole life I shall never drink as much wine as I have drunk here." They relate with delight how they pillaged the cellars: "We are still on our way to Louvain. Here, round about the station, there is no house which has not been damaged or destroyed utterly. We got out of the train and went into the burning town. Never have I seen such a sight. The most beautiful houses in the principal street were on fire, and the pillaging began at once, principally that of wine; you ought to have seen it. Everyone had as much as he could possibly carry!"

Drunk or sober, the atrocities that they commit give them a certain pleasure in them, but which, nevertheless, in the long run becomes monotonous. "It is astonishing in going through a village which has not been burned if, during the whole day, we do not see at least one 'sniper' shot. . . . In the evening, we have a good meal and drink red wine, the property of some priest who has been shot, and it does one good to see how the houses from which they fired are blazing!" Soon even these cruelties, committed on command, are not specially noted: "On September 6th, a quiet day, we only sent to Germany three hun-

dred Belgians (*civilians*), among whom there were twenty-two priests." The tears of those who are parting from them just touch for a moment the heart of this soldier of the Landsturm, who is taking part in this "expedition": It "was terrible to see the women and children bidding the prisoners farewell. All these people are excited by the priests, who have preached to them from the churches that they must fire on the Germans, and kill them, if they wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven!" His passing emotion ends in words of hate.

Ferociously cruel towards the helpless and unarmed, the German, according to his own description, as soon as he is alone and imagines he is in danger; as soon as it is no longer a question of advancing in a body, swept on in spite of oneself, reveals depths of cowardice and shameful fear: "It is not easy," admits one soldier, "to be on sentry duty, at night, in an enemy's country. We used to get a strange feeling (what a discreet expression!) when the moon was hidden and the wind rose." The officer has no more pluck than the soldier: "Our captain, who, frankly, is extremely prudent (another delicate euphuism!), always takes two

brancardiers, armed with revolvers, with him as a protection, if he has to go in the evening to some solitary spot ! ” And so must we immortalise those slayers of women and children !

But such emotional natures are not strangers to poetry. A man who is capable of imagining in the dusk, when the trees shiver, that two sentinels are “ an encampment of infantry,” proves that he has an emotional nature. Here we have blue-eyed poetic Germany ! . .

“ The journey was lovely ; beautiful landscapes and valleys and mountains, smiling villages and some fine old houses.” The villages do not smile in Belgium just now, but a poet cannot help being aware of their devastated beauty : “ We see burned houses. But, apart from that, the country is very poetic. . . . There are some beautiful villas. . . . At Vertryck, Lovenjoul, Corbeek-Loo, Bierbeek, many of the dwellings were blazing. *It was magnificent.* It is growing dark, and a villa, surrounded by a fine park, is on fire.” Is not that a little poem ? . . . The German soldiers on patrol duty, could they resist the attraction of Gothic architecture—which, as everyone knows, is of German origin—here they are noting their impressions on the

charming church of Diest: "On August 4th we made a big round; something was in the wind that we had to discover (!). It took us thirteen hours. We came to Diest, and I went into the church; I have never seen such magnificence. We are getting sausage again to eat: it is disgusting. The beer is not nearly so good as German beer. At every street corner there is a urinal." Is this not a typical instinctive German, with his bestial lack of intelligence, his susceptible feelings, and his coarse appetites? Military operations, the poetic beauty of the cathedral, the sausage and the urinal are all the same to him.

On reflection, we find that that is the stamp of his barbarism. He makes no distinction between what is beautiful and what is ordinary, what is good and what is evil. He commits crimes, when he is told to, with the same heavy docility with which he drills, or drinks, or eats. He does not question what he is told to do, or argue about what he does. He is the servile and unconscious expression of a primitive culture which is the very opposite of civilisation. Everything he sees interests him in the same degree. All that his master tolerates, or commands, seems

natural and right to him. He may do or say anything. He has no reserve, no modesty, no shame. Sometimes he has shown that he has learned much, but he has assimilated nothing. He is disciplined temperamentally, and it is no credit to him. He is religious, yet ready to commit on order any sacrilege. He is chaste—but not when he is campaigning. He is sentimental, yet cruel.

Franz Schmiedt is a musketeer of the 1st Battalion of Infantry of the Landsturm of Burg (No. 201). He is—they all are—father of a family, a Christian and a soldier. Here are some extracts from his diary :—

“August 26th, afternoon.—Washed my feet.

“August 29th.—Came to Esemael, Tirlemont and Cumptich; some fighting. Houses burned.

“Now we come to a little town called Louvain. All the houses are burned. The town has been burned because the British (!) and the Belgians have fired on a train carrying Landwehr” (new version). “They warn us to take the greatest precautions. On all sides the flames are rising, and the sparks flying, and there is the crackling of burning wood: all this town of fifty thousand inhabitants is on fire. We go through burning

streets. The best houses are broken open, and we requisition everything to eat, thousands of bottles of wine, three great casks of wine, cigars, jam, saucepans, coffee, coffee mills, sugar, towels, body linen, brushes, combs, etc. We are satiated with wine; we have drunk as much champagne as we could at twenty marks a bottle. I was not drunk, but several of my comrades who could not drink in moderation were quite drunk! When we had got a splendid load of booty, we went back to the barracks. Suddenly we heard firing, about five kilometres away. It was horrible, and that sobered us, and gave our thoughts a different turn. Things are getting serious. We tried to sleep with our heads on the table, and we had drunk so much that we were sick. Then we packed up the booty.

“Now we are leaving the town. We meet women and children who hold up their hands and implore mercy. . . .

“Everywhere we see rows of burned houses. They are all houses from which the sharpshooters have fired on us! . . . On the road there are still people who bring us water to drink, but we make them drink first in case the water may be poisoned. . . . It is a very hot Sunday and we are perspiring dreadfully!

“ On August 31st we learned that the enemy’s cavalry had been sighted, and that two regiments of infantry were marching on us. This meant an almost sleepless night. Our nerves are on edge. Every moment we imagined we were being attacked, and we dreamt of the most amazing combats ; then we were rudely wakened. . . . And we commended ourselves to God, and prayed : ‘ Lord, Thou knowest the life of each one of us ; is it Thy will that I shall return to my home ? Then let Thy will be done, and let me see my wife and children again ! What will become of them ? ’

“ The whole town that we are in (Aërschot) is empty and in a state of chaos. The houses that have not been burned are deserted, for the inhabitants have fled. The great thing is that there are still some women left !

“ On our right there are more than six hundred Belgian and British (!) civilian prisoners. They are shut up in a church and in a convent, and round each building there is a network of iron wire to prevent the prisoners from escaping. Any who attempt to do so will be shot, but none of them move ; they are terrified.

“ The Belgian soldiers fire behind our men’s backs. They cut off the ears and put out the

eyes of any who fall into their hands. The people are fanatical and dominated by the priests. They do blindly whatever those priests tell them, caring little if their obedience means their death or not. They are literally the slaves of their priests.

“The town has a lamentable appearance, everything is destroyed—the houses burned and pillaged, clothes, furniture, everything thrown about anyhow. We pillage and steal all we can. We might take away a lot of things, but what could we do with them? It is better here than in the villa (their last camp), and there is bread and lard.

“... We were singing till two o'clock, one of our men accompanying us on the piano. It was fine.

“At six o'clock in the evening two hundred and forty civil prisoners were brought in, twenty-one priests and fifteen wounded. Our company is billeted in the college. Here, our men are simply stealing wholesale from each other. The priests who occupy the college live very well; while they drink and enjoy themselves, they keep their people in ignorance, and they forbid them to read and write: from eight years old

children are forced to work; prostitution is rife, brothers and sisters living together as husband and wife, and moreover the wives commit prostitution elsewhere. The woman has all authority and the man can say nothing. But, all the same, those people are not so cruel as they are made out to be. They are only priest-ridden."

Washing his feet, or burning a village, his love of pillage or his fear in the night, insulting the poor people who bring them water, and calling on the Almighty, his thought of home, his search for women to violate, his singing and music in the midst of the ruins, the soldiers' cruelty, and this would-be psychological analysis of the inhabitants—is this not all typical of the German nation, with their savage brutality, their inevitable dullness, their profound cowardice and their love of *gemuth*, their mysticism, their moments of fear, and their coarse exuberance on the days of easy victory; with this passive, imbecile credulity, which accepts unquestioningly all that comes from higher authority, even the most infamous and ridiculous calumny? . . . Thus the poor Belgian country must not only be crucified, but calumniated, systematically and deliberately, by generals who, so as to render

more terrible the aggression of Germany—for pride of their country is the mainspring of their lives—make fun of the prisoners, massacre the priests and the women and all innocent people, and who, to excuse such behaviour, represent them to the soldier as corrupt, as cruel that they might excite his cruelty, and as treacherously sly that they might prevent his pitying them!

Yet they dare after that to say they are not responsible for the violations, the individual attacks, the torture of the prisoners and the assassination of the priests! *

* All has been carefully arranged so as to make the soldiers who may be possessed of a conscience ready assassins, and to kill any feeling of pity in the hearts of those who might feel it. They wish to give them a reason to hate the Belgians, and they write them such letters as this, which was found in a prisoner's knapsack, signed by a doctor in a high position ("I should like very much to join in the campaign," he said, "as Inspector of Ambulance"):—

"You are soon going to Brussels with your regiment. Watch yourself with the civilians, especially in the villages. Do not let them come near you. Fire without mercy on any that come too near. They are the most sly and treacherous people. *The women and children are even armed.* Never go into a house alone. If you drink, make the people drink first, and keep them away from you; in the papers we read of many instances in which soldiers have been shot while they were drinking. *You, soldiers, ought to spread such fear of the German army round you* that no civilian would risk coming near. Always keep with the others. I hope that you have read the papers and that you know how to behave. Above all, no pity for these wretches. Go for them mercilessly with your rifle and your bayonet. You will have heard the news of our great victories. . . ."

There are many points in common in this letter with the diary

The diary of musketeer Schmiedt, like so many other of the soldiers' diaries, not only gives the Belgian people a picture of the Teutonic soldier, but it adds to that of the head of their nation who, to reach his end, has never stopped short of lying. It proves conclusively that there is nothing contradictory between a soft-hearted Germany and a Germany with bloodstained hands. And it keeps us from making any distinction in our hate between the criminal of the lowest type, the criminal in gold lace, or the greatest criminal of them all—in short, between Germany and the Germans !

of Schmiedt the musketeer. We have here a good example of the way in which they excite the soldiers and the whole of Germany by lying, as much on the subject of the peaceful Belgian people as with regard to their pretended victories.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VICTIM QUIVERING YET PROUD.

THE historian who later studies in detail this temporary conquest of Belgium, will be surprised to find that this terrible war, which has strewn our battle-fields with thousands of dead, has killed as many civilians as soldiers. A national war indeed, since a whole people has been sacrificed, and the blood of fathers and mothers flowed with that of their sons !

I have just re-read the eloquent pages that M. Lavissee consecrated just after the war of 1870 to the German's occupation in the North of France. He was justly indignant at the cruel and arrogant behaviour of the victor. But the war of 1870, odious and brutal as it was, appears, compared to this, like a war between gentlemen. I know that pillage was rife, that murderers were not rare, that hostages were

taken, houses burned and women outraged. I know that crime and terrorising were for the invader the acknowledged means of warfare. I know that Bazeilles blazed in the horizon, but to-day, when the cynical theories of Bismarck have spread through the whole nation and penetrated every member of it, from generals to soldiers, these horrors are no longer isolated facts : they are the thread running through the whole invasion. In the invaded part of France, as in the occupied part of Belgium, can be seen the smoking ruins of a hundred Bazeilles.

All that I have just written is neither a statement nor an inventory, it is merely an outline. I wished to give a general idea of the German atrocities, not to catalogue them. After such long enumerations, by which I have tried to show the multiplicity, the variety and the monotony of their infamous behaviour, to be anything like complete, I should still add facts and more facts. My pen is weary and my reader also. Only the oppressor is never tired !

Later we will be able to make, province by province, district by district, a list of all that the Germans have done. The first task of the Government, once reinstalled, will be to draw up a plan

of the massacre, and give a picture of its horror. To-day we have only the fragments of the whole. Coming from districts that one imagined were scarcely touched, they can only give a feeble idea of what that whole will be like.

Let me give, by way of example, a dry, business-like statement of what is known of the southern part of Belgian Luxembourg: "Neufchâteau, twenty-one houses burned; Etalle, thirty houses burned; Houdemont, sixty-four houses burned; Rulles, half the houses destroyed by fire; Ansart, the village completely burned; Tintigny, three houses only remain; Jamoigne, half the village destroyed; Les Bulles, half the village destroyed; Moyon, forty-two houses destroyed; Rossignol, the village entirely burned; Mussy-la-ville, twenty houses destroyed; Bertrix, fifteen houses destroyed; Bleid, a great part of the village burned; Signeulx, a great part of the village burned; Ethe, five-sixths of the village burned; Bellefontaine, six houses destroyed; Musson, half the village destroyed; Baranzy, four houses remain; Saint-Léger, six houses burned; Semel, all the houses burned; Maissin, sixty-four houses out of one hundred burned; Villance, nine houses burned; Anloy, twenty-six houses

burned. The number of houses burned in the province of Luxembourg is over three thousand." And the inquirer goes on to give the total of persons shot in this same confined area:—"Neufchâteau, eighteen shot; Vance, one; Etalle, thirty; Houdemont, eleven; Tintigny, one hundred and fifty-seven; Izel, ten; Rossignol, one hundred and six; Bertrix, twenty-one; Etbe, about three hundred shot, and five hundred and thirty persons missing; Bellefontaine, one shot; Latour, only seventeen men survive; Saint-Léger, eleven shot; Maissin, ten men, one woman and a young girl shot, two men and two young girls wounded; Villance, two men shot, one young girl wounded; Anloy, fifty-two men and women shot; Claireuse, two men shot and two hanged."

Let us take another example of the province of Hainaut, which for a long time it was thought had escaped. Here is a small district taken at random:—"In thirty parishes around Charleroi (this town is not reckoned among them) a first and very rough calculation gives the following: One hundred and ten men killed, nine women and eight children; fifty-four men wounded, twelve women and three children; three hundred and

sixty-eight men, two hundred and fifty women, sixty-three whole families missing ; seven hundred and sixty-nine houses burned from floor to ceiling, two thousand two hundred and eleven houses pillaged and then partially destroyed by fire, three thousand families homeless ! ”

And thus it is from one end of the country to the other, in the districts where fighting has taken place as in the districts that they have only passed through. Everywhere there has been burning, pillaging and killing. In Luxembourg, a province with a scattered population, there are more than a thousand dead. In the province of Namur, out of three thousand inhabitants, more than two thousand have succumbed. In the district yesterday so prosperous, between Malines and Vilvorde, there are more dead than living. He who one day told his troops to remember the wonderful example of Attila should be pleased with his disciples !

The great towns exist still, oppressed, but proud and intact. But let no one judge by them of the state of the country. Around the respective centres the country stretches every day more devastated and oppressed, full of ruins and dead. Life is completely paralysed

there, all sense of security has vanished and gloom reigns supreme.

Columns of fire rise to the heavens, and the sound of shooting, constantly reminding the peasants that the enemy is still there, that he can begin this massacre again if he pleases, and when he pleases. All the riches, all the mild beauties of the fields, all the careless poetry of these white and red villages, on the edge of their meadows, all have vanished. "We are going," says a Prussian soldier, "through a country where there are still some farms standing, but all deserted. The streets are generally destroyed, the cattle are bellowing (for water) in the stables, or here and there they wander free before the burned outhouses." "In the villages," writes another, "are to be seen only very old men and women who sadly raise their arms to heaven in supplication." "I saw on the doorstep of a burned house," says a witness, "the dead body of a man in his shirt-sleeves; beside him lay a pig that had been killed and then left." Men and animals have been killed, pell-mell!

In thousands and hundreds of thousands the peasants have fled. Panic seized them one

day, and they have gathered together their few rags and started out along the roads. Many who would have remained have been driven away, a lamentable flock. Some have insisted on staying in their homes, preferring death to exile: fire has smoked them out; still they would not go away, and they have been seen crouching in some ditch, a few yards from their burning cottage, with the sparks flying near them, and a mother, reduced to taking the dirty water from the pools to sprinkle her little children, whose clothes were burning. . . . Then, their last hope gone, with a sob they have started out along the roads. Whither?

Long processions went along these roads. From one village to another, the poor wretches have been swept along on an ever-increasing wave. Taken in and housed by the inhabitants of the towns that were still free, they have sometimes had ten days' rest there, and then once again have had to take up their belongings over their shoulders and go on.

In the towns they line the pavement, drinking their share of soup in the street, sleeping in the theatres, precarious shelters from which the approach of the enemy would soon drive them.

Sometimes they have not been quick enough. Then the enemy would overtake them; they would find them hungry and homeless, and as the towns that had given them hospitality knew that henceforth they would have to provide for whole garrisons, and to submit to all that the enemy should exact, they have had to send away those hungry creatures, from the burning villages, to their own deserted village, or to the ruins of their city. Thus it is that, after the occupation of Ghent, Termonde, this veritable cemetery, was repeopled with pale, pinched creatures who crowded in the cellars, dying with hunger.

The others went on their way. Boats left Ostend laden with a miserable crowd. Cries of farewell were heard, and women sobbing. One day, amidst the despair of the crowd that was thronging the quays, the last boat went away. There was only one road left, and there I saw them trudging along beside the quiet canal. A white monotonous endless road, with tall poplars, all leaning in the same direction as if they too were in flight before the enemy; the people overran into the bare fields. And, during hours and days blood flowed from this open vein,

the life-blood of a country nearly drained—and the Belgian people went silently towards the Unknown. Carts laden with furniture and bundles, wheel-barrows on which they were wheeling the old women, children holding each others hands, and mothers carrying their last born, old men seated in barges on the canal, that their sons were dragging slowly along the tow-path! A mourning procession, a wandering multitude! Invalids, cripples, wounded, every description, all frightfully tired, who yet, when they came to a signpost on which they read the word *France*, would turn to each other with a trembling smile at the sight of this friendly word.

Belgians of France, of Britain, of Holland, Belgians of Belgium, a living nation scattered to the four winds of heaven, they are one in their prayers and hopes for deliverance. There is not one among them who has not had his share in this martyrdom. And yet, is there one who would change places with the "Victor"?

We were the least warlike country in the world. Since the foundation of our kingdom we had been free from invasion. Our people, made up of small shopkeepers, were neither fanatical nor extreme. They were confidently anti-militarist

and instinctively pacific. Those who in these last years had had to do with the training of the Belgian army, were faced with mistrust, indolence, and calculations. The nation loved France, but did not hate Germany. She seemed to them heavy, pedantic, hypocritical perhaps in her friendship. That was all. Belgium was neutral, and always ready to fulfil her duty as a neutral, which, it was thought, consisted in not interfering with what took place beyond her frontier, and the day that she had to keep her word, we have seen that she did not hesitate at the call to arms.

The keeping of this word has landed her amid the most awful dangers ; her upright spirit has triumphed. Not only has she, ill-prepared for this great conflict, had to send her sons to their death, but she has had, moreover, undeservedly, to share in all the suffering of war. Not once, under the worst tortures, has she murmured. Every man, from the humblest to the greatest, knows, however, that they are suffering for a spiritual principle, for an Idea. They know that, from the point of view of material advantages, it would have been to their interest to yield to the German propositions. They know

that if they had said "yes" to the demand to cross their land they would have been safeguarded, and both their goods and their lives spared, but that would have been to have shown a merchant's soul. They wished to buy nothing at the price of shame.

They knew that a form of resistance, a parade on their frontiers, a few shots, and some dead and wounded would have saved appearances. They stood by their Government and did not contemplate this compromise, nor did the Government, which had too often been opposed to the laws of national defence, consider it for a moment. Had they, like Luxembourg, had no army, or had they simply taken shelter behind their independence, nothing would have happened to them; and that is what we all know, but no one said it aloud, and no one thought it in their hearts.

Crushed, murdered, exiled and ruined, the poor people had now only one thought: "Victory and pride with Honour safe!" When, after their entry into Brussels, the Germans, to rouse the populace against the Government of Antwerp, which was responsible, so they said, for their misfortunes, published a new

demand for a peaceful passage made by them after the heroic resistance of Liége, "which had saved the honour of the Belgian arms," and the disdainful refusal of the King, this oppressed nation only saw in these advances by the Germans a homage to their courage, and there was not one who said: "Why do we not yield this time?"

The native nobility of a race, that the foreigner has long thought mediocre, merely practical, too fond of moderation! Question the refugees, exiled for months from their homes; question the poor wretches left over there beneath the heavy yoke; none any more now than five months ago think for a moment of regretting the sacrifice made in defence of their honour. It seems so natural to them that they do not look upon themselves as heroes. They have simply acted as they should have done. I mention that here, to draw attention to the difference—after the recital of so many crimes and so much meanness—between the victim and his oppressor.

Belgium, though bruised and quivering, is not dead. Nor will she ever die, since in the eyes of the whole world she incarnates a principle necessary to the life of the world. She knows that she will never die, and that her very sacrifice

and apparent death are the most beautiful proofs of her living reality. She is possessed of a touching confidence that neither repeated trial and oppression, every day becoming more odious, nor even time itself can shake: she trusts in Him who can punish a guilty nation as easily as a guilty sinner. And so she waits. Valiant amidst her bloodstained fields; silent, she appeals by her very silence and her proud suffering to that justice for which she hungers and thirsts.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE REVENGE OF RIGHT.

BEFORE God and man the cause is heard. God will punish in His own good time. The world has passed judgment, and to do so they have not waited to hear the whole list of German cruelties. From these first scenes of the Belgian tragedy they have guessed the horror of the rest. The decisive reports of the Commission of Inquest, the documents given in those pages will show to all those who, in their heart of hearts, had already passed judgment, that they had not been mistaken. Let them hasten to utter that condemnation aloud. Belgium, a neutral state, that a great Power has tried to crush, has a right to the protestations of all neutral peoples ; an honest nation who is paying for having kept her word, she has a right to the support and sympathy of all honourable people.

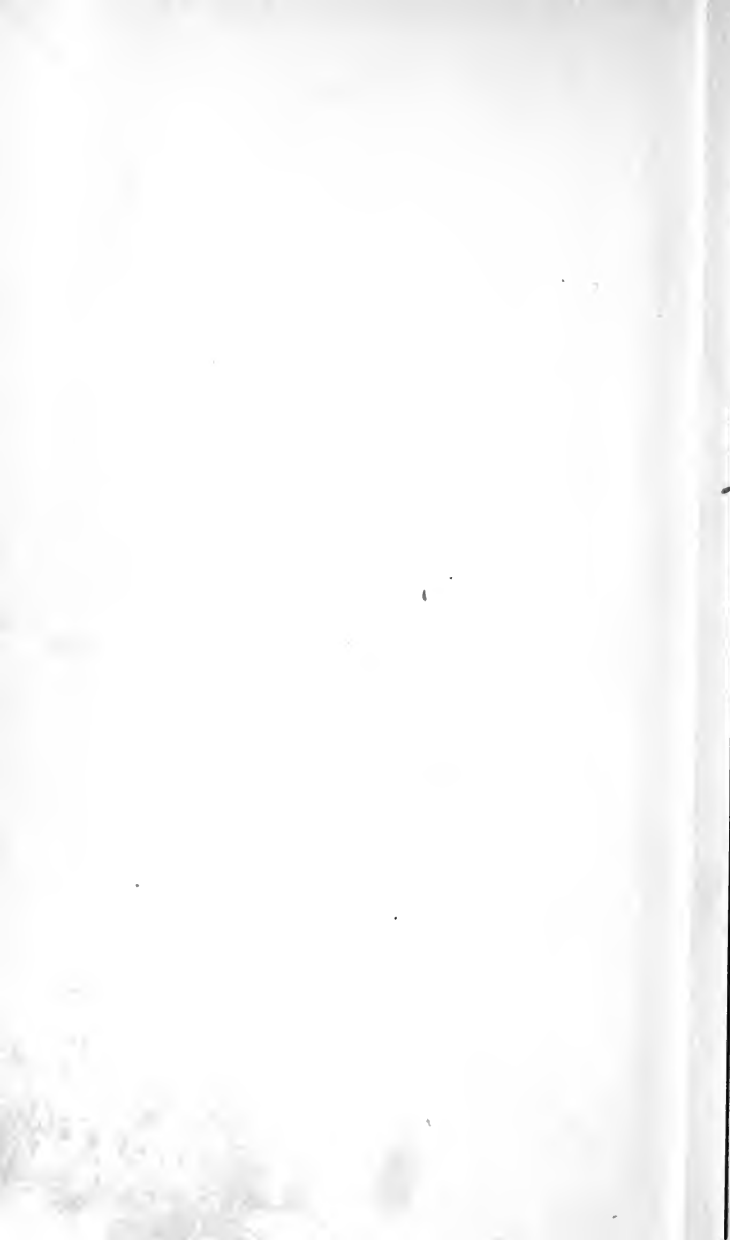
A martyred nation, she has a right to the pity of all those who have an arm to strike and a heart to feel. What are they waiting for? To learn in detail all the facts of this martyrdom? They must be patient then, until the liberation of Belgian territory. For Germany to pronounce her "mea culpa"? Then they must have a strange idea of her intelligence and her good faith. A day will come when, convinced of her crime, she will see her mistake, but that will be only when she is beaten. This people, both arrogant and servile, who has shown a brutal contempt for Right when it thought that it possessed Might, will respect it only when Might has been crushed by Right. Then her leaders and her generals will regret their organised barbarism. Then her soldiers will look with despair at their blood stains that all the perfumes of Arabia could not cleanse, and then her intellectuals can no longer say without enquiry: "*It is not true.*"

Thanks to their defeat, having once more regained that critical spirit on which they prided themselves in times of peace, knowing their culpability at last, they will no longer attempt to deny what they have done, and we

shall put before them the list, every day growing longer, of the atrocities which they deny, and this mass of vile deeds and dead bodies will compel them to shudder with horror and disgust.

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